

**Aberdeen City Council  
Work Session  
April 23, 2007**

**PRESENT** Mayor Simmons, Council President Hiob, Councilwoman Elliott, Councilmen Kupferman and Yensan

Mr. Miller, Mr. Jack, and Chief Rudy

**OPENING**

Mayor Simmons called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

**TOPICS OF DISCUSSION**

1. Phillips Army Airfield

Mayor Simmons noted that this project was started approximately 20 years ago as an economic engine for the City. Much renovation is needed before this facility could be used in the future. It has been determined that the Department of Defense will use this Airfield as they see fit. However, the City will try to remain involved with the planning. There is a possibility that future use could include a college campus; but, this is only a concept at this time.

Councilwoman Elliott said there has been no joint use discussion since January, 2005. Mayor Simmons indicated that Fluor Corp. no longer has exclusivity and is excluded from development of this facility. He stated that the Council will be involved with future decisions.

2. FY 08 Budget

Mayor Simmons thanked Mr. Miller, Mr. Jack, and all members of the Staff who were involved in preparation of this Budget. He noted that this is a “lean” Budget which includes some employee raises and funding for some Capital Projects.

Mr. Miller said the total of all funds included in the Budget is \$21,000,000 which is a very “lean budget”. The General Fund amounts are based on a tax rate of 71.5 cent tax rate which was reduced from 73.5 cent tax rate. This year the Stadium Fund has been increased to \$331,000 from \$50,000 last year. Included in this Budget is the hiring of some additional personnel and the purchase of some new equipment, i.e., DPW trucks and cars for the Police Department.

Mr. Jack mentioned the following items which are the reason for the FY 2008 Budget increase to \$21,000,000. These items are salary increases, Capital Projects, and the Stadium shortfall. The increase in Capital Projects is 176%, and there is a projected shortfall of \$311,000 in the Stadium Fund. The following revenue increases were noted: General Fund-6%, Water Fund-11%, Sewer Fund-18%. Loans in the amount of \$3,000,000 will be secured to fund Capital Projects. Mr. Jack reviewed the various areas of the Budget on a line by line basis.

Mr. Miller reported the following increases in the General Fund: Council legislation, employee incentives, Christmas bonuses, staff luncheons, payroll related increases, etc.

Mr. Jack and Mr. Miller reviewed the Water and Sewer Fund income and expenses and noted that Mr. Lapinsky would provide any additional necessary details.

Council President Hiob feels salary increases are necessary to maintain parity with Harford County; hopefully, this goal can be reached in the near future. He thanked Mr. Miller, Mr. Jack and the City staff for their work on this Budget.

Mayor Simmons said hiring a City engineer and IT person would be cost effective mechanisms for Aberdeen.

Council President Hiob noted that the 16% increase for deputies in Harford County depends on their employment status. Mayor Simmons indicated that some deputies received increases as high as 40% but the average was 16%.

Councilwoman Elliott asked why the environmental staff was being increased. Mr. Miller said it was not cost effective to use DPW people for these jobs. She inquired about realignment of Staff time in conjunction with APG work. Mr. Jack has met with DPW to determine the amount of time spent by each department. This is the basis that was used for this information.

Councilman Yensan thanked Mr. Miller, Mr. Jack and the City Staff for their work on the Budget. He stated his disappointment with the Stadium fund.

Councilman Kupferman said a 2 cent tax reduction is not acceptable and this subject will be discussed at a later date.

Councilwoman Elliott asked if a program could be created for seniors 65 and over for a real estate tax discount. This action would result in a cost to the City of \$109,000. She also wanted to see a larger tax reduction than that of 2 cents. A suggestion was made to reduce spending in some areas to find money to help senior citizens. She will meet with Mr. Miller on some line

items because budgets are going higher and higher. Councilwoman Elliott wants the Budget to be trimmed.

Mayor Simmons said the amount mentioned by Councilwoman Elliott, \$109,000, would not be sufficient to further reduce the tax rate.

Council President Hiob, in response to Councilwoman Elliott, said the previous tax increases were also approved by members of the Council and were definitely necessary. If taxes are reduced, borrowing will be necessary. Instituting a 65 and older tax break would create a gray area which would be difficult to enforce. He feels the tax rate should be the same for all City residents.

Councilwoman Elliott said she has never received an 8% salary increase. She suggested reducing the pay increase to the Police Department to 4%.

Mayor Simmons noted that suffering attrition is not cost effective for the City. Because of the current working conditions, the Police Department is receiving applications from those desiring lateral moves. He repeated that the Budget as submitted is "very lean".

Council President Hiob thanked the City Manager, Mayor, and all Department Heads for their work on this Budget. Everyone is looking at items to trim.

Mayor Simmons said nothing in this Budget reflects what may come, i.e., water, annexation, etc. Corporate projects could be completed, and the COPT project consisting of 800,000 sq. ft. will produce additional income. Everyone was assured that the Council will revisit this Budget, if and when, additional funds are received changes could be made.

Mr. Miller said copies of the Budget would be made available to the public.

### 3. Zoning Text Amendment

Councilman Yensan referred to a letter from True Joy Healing & Restoration Ministries, Inc. asking to change the text of the Aberdeen Development Zoning Code for B-2 and B-3 zoning to include churches specifically in the Downtown District. The current Code prohibits the expansion of churches. This request is for discussion only tonight.

This church is asking to move to 24 & 26 W. Bel Air Avenue which has 16 parking spaces. Additionally, 24 more parking spaces would be required. Pastor Telsee has contacted Harford Bank and Lucy's Floral Shop to negotiate use of their parking slots.

The Economic Development Commission has received this request and is asking for guidance from the City Council before making a determination on this issue.

Mayor Simmons noted that, previously, church parking has never been a problem because businesses in the area are usually not open.

Councilman Kupferman does not favor this issue because the Downtown area should be marketed to businesses. Eventually, upscale shops and restaurants could come into the area.

Council President Hiob has no opinion at this time. He wants to meet with Ms. Grover and others on the City staff for their input. As liaison to the Planning Commission, he will take any and all information to them.

Mayor Simmons said this area will be market driven in the future for economic development. Also, offices in the area on and off Post will also be included in the development of this area.

#### **OTHER MATTERS**

- Earth Day was an incredible success. The Lions Club did an amazing job. Children were everywhere and there was no cost to the City. Jim Litke was commended for his innovative work on this project and its success. Councilman Yensan said the non-perishable food was donated to Grove Presbyterian Church's Food Pantry.
- The Big Event 10K Fun Run/Walk at Aberdeen Festival Park will be held on May 5<sup>th</sup> from 7:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m. Applications are available in City Hall and from True Joy Ministries.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

The Work Session was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.