.

MINUTES
City of Cocoa
Budget Hearing

September 17, 2024

A City Council Budget Hearing was held on Tuesday, September 17, 2024, in Cocoa City Hall, in City Council Chambers, located at 65 Stone Street, in Cocoa, Florida, 32922, as publicly noticed.

Opening Matters:

Mayor Blake called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Councilmember Weeks provided the invocation and Councilmember Koss led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Recording Secretary took the roll.

PRESENT:	Michael C. Blake	Mayor
	Lavander Hearn	Deputy Mayor
	Patricia Weeks	Councilmember
	Lorraine Koss	Councilmember
	Kristin Eick	Asst. City Attorney – *via phone*
	Stockton Whitten	City Manager
	Abbey Bass	Asst. City Clerk
ABSENT:		
	Alex Goins	Councilmember

OTHER STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Abby Morgan, Public Works Director; Rebecca Bowman, Finance Director; Evander Collier, Police Chief; Jonathan Lamm, Fire Chief; Jack Walsh, Utilities Director; Charlene Neuterman, Community Development Director; Tammy Gemmati, Administrative Services Director; Samantha Senger, Communications & Economic Development Director; Rob Beach, Chief Technology Officer; and Corbin Gilbert, Help Desk Support Tech.

I. Public Hearing:

1. (a) Approve Resolution 2024-088 adopting the Final Millage Rate of 6.9532 mills for the City of Cocoa Fiscal Year 2025 commencing on October 1, 2024 and ending on September 30, 2025, which represents an increase of 9.05% over the rolled-back rate of 6.3671.

Rebecca Bowman, Finance Director, presented the item via PowerPoint. [1]

Councilmember Koss explained that she understood the percent rate but wanted to know what the actual increase in the budget was compared to last year.

Ms. Bowman advised she would review that information in the next item.

Mayor Blake opened the item to the public for comments or questions.

Kristin Lorti, Cocoa resident, advised Council that she prepared for this meeting and was not given adequate time and requested the timer be turned off. She wanted to know if the millage could be decreased at this meeting. She said other cities in Brevard County are not going with the millage rate and they have chosen to go with a lower rate instead of the rolled back rate.

She added that she went all the way back to 2007 and there was a reduction. Furthermore, in 2014 there was a reduction from 5.9811 to 5.790. She wanted to clarify if this millage rate was final or if it could still be changed to the rollback rate.

There being no further questions or comments, Mayor Blake closed the item to the public.

Councilmember Weeks advised she was not on Council when the rate was determined but asked since the millage rate has not gone up but home prices went up would homestead properties be going up three percent too. Additionally, she asked if this rate was based on the taxable value of homes and if new home construction value would be included.

Ms. Bowan advised it would include new construction and that’s where we get the total value of revenue collected.

Mayor Blake asked about the cost for the Fire and Police Departments. He also asked about the new Amazon opening and the revenue it will be bringing in.

[1] Exhibit A – FY25 Millage and Budget Presentation – Seconding Budget Hearing

City Manager Whitten advised the rate has been maintained for several years and advised there are two separate items. He explained the difference between the two.

Councilmember Koss asked if the state advised which order the items had to be heard in. She advised that she's supported the millage rate because she believes Cocoa is on the verge of greatness. She received a lot of calls and a lot of people are concerned. She is a little concerned with the rate as well. She wanted to know the difference between this year's budget and last year's budget.

Ms. Bowman provided further clarification.

* **MOTION by Mayor Blake; Seconded by Deputy Mayor Hearn, to approve Resolution 2024-088 adopting the Final Millage Rate of 6.9532 mills for the City of Cocoa Fiscal Year 2025 commencing on October 1, 2024 and ending on September 30, 2025, which represents an increase of 9.05% over the rolled-back rate of 6.3761.**

AYES: Blake, Hearn, Koss, Weeks, Goins

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

(b) Approve Resolution 2024-089 adopting the Final Budget and CIP for the City of Cocoa for the Fiscal Year 2025 commencing on October 1, 2024 and ending on September 30, 2025. (24-517). (Finance Director)

Ms. Bowman presented the item.

Mayor Blake reopened the meeting to the public.

Ms. Lorti advised she wanted to dispute the millage and the budget. She said the information online is confusing for people who look at it. The budget on the website is 95 pages and does not provide enough information and is very hard to understand. She felt that Cocoa has the least amount of information in the county.

Additionally, she thinks we should have a better system for citizens to understand the increase. She inquired about the water bill increase and asked for the employee's salary increase rate.

There being no further questions or comments, Mayor Blake closed the Hearing to the public.

Councilmember Koss agreed that a better breakdown would have been helpful. She advised that salary increases are usually 3% but this year its 5% and advised

that there was pressure to provide that salary increase. She explained what she looks for when increasing the budget.

Mayor Blake advised Palm Bay's budget is different than ours as well as Titusville. He advised several of our employees have left and went to Palm Bay due to higher wages and asked how can we compete if we do not increase salaries. He pointed out that all over the state organizations are losing employees due to higher dollar salaries.

Councilmember Weeks mentioned that the Junny Rios splash pad was done away with and wanted to know what happened to the extra money. She asked if the money has to be dedicated to the park or if it can be used elsewhere.

City Manager Whitten advised that it can be used however Council decides. He touched on the salary increase and that other counties are taking our employees because they can offer higher wages and explained that is why it is a 5% salary increase.

Ms. Bowman explained that the funds will be there until Council gives direction as to what they would like the funds to go to.

* **MOTION by Deputy Mayor Hearn; Seconded by Councilmember Goins to approve Resolution 2024-089 adopting the Final Budget and CIP for the City of Cocoa for the Fiscal Year 2025 commencing on October 1, 2024 and ending on September 30, 2025.**

AYES: Blake, Hearn, Goins, Koss, Weeks

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

II. Council Business

1. Approve a budget resolution and related BAF #24-131 to increase project contingency funding in the amount of $420,000 for the Fiske Boulevard and Broadmoor Acres Drainage Improvement Project. Approve Project Construction Contingency Resolution adding $420,000 to the existing contingency amount of $1,985,102 for a new total of $2,405,102. Authorize the City Manager to approve and issue construction change orders not to exceed $2,405,102 related to the project. The new construction contingency amount supersedes Agenda's 23-458 approved by Council on 3/22/22 and 24-223 approved by Council on 5/14/24. (Public Works Director)

Councilmember Goins advised he had some concerns about the community and the construction and noted that the community is concerned about the delays. He stated we need to be more transparent and give more information to the community.

City Manager Whitten pointed out that we have a dedicated page to this project for the citizens. He shared that a couple of businesses have been affected by this and we have worked with them and the contractor. He advised we are nearing the end of these projects.

Ms. Abby Morgan, Public Works Director, shared that the completion date is March 2025 but she advised they are in the last quarter of the projects and roads will be open in two weeks.

Councilmember Goins said it could be beneficial for the project manager/contractor to go door to door and hand out flyers to help raise awareness as some people do not have access to the web page or might not know how to access it.

Samantha Senger, Communications and Economic Development Director, advised they mailed out notices to everyone in the community in the last version of the Cocoa FYI.

Councilmember Koss shared that she supports Councilmember Goins' approach to wanting something a little more personal. She advised having someone walk door to door might be a little more personal and be better for the community.

Councilmember Weeks said her concern is the change in the price and asked what the cost increase was due to. She stated it seems like a huge cost overrun and wanted to know why.

City Manager Whitten advised the city received $ 4 million from FEMA and $1.8 million from utilities.

Mayor Blake opened the item to the public. There being no questions or comments, the public portion of the Hearing was closed.

*** MOTION by Councilmember Weeks; Seconded by Councilmember Koss, to approve Resolution 2024-090 Amending the FY2024 Budget, BAF #24-131 IFT (1&2), to increase Project Contingency funding in the amount of $420,000 for the Fiske Boulevard and Broadmoor Acres Drainage Improvement Project. Approve Project Construction Contingency Resolution 2024-091 adding $420,000 to the existing contingency amount of $1,985,102 for a new total of $2,405,102. Authorize the City Manager to approve and issue construction change orders not to exceed $2,405,102 related to the project. The new construction contingency amount supersedes Agenda's 23-458 approved by Council on 3/22/22 and 24-223 approved by Council on 5/14/24.**

AYES: Blake, Hearn, Goins, Koss, Weeks

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

III. Adjournment:

*** MOTION by Councilmember Weeks; Seconded by Councilmember Koss, to adjourn the Council Budget Hearing of September 17, 2024.**

AYES: Blake, Hearn, Goins, Koss, Weeks

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

_____

Michael C. Blake, Mayor

ATTEST:

_____

Abbey Bass, Assistant City Clerk