

Bakersfield Informational Meeting
Wednesday, February 28, 2024
7:00am

Meeting was called to order at 7:02pm by Josh Goss.

Members present: Josh Goss (chair), Lance, John

Members absent: Todd Cosgrove, Terri Gates

Residents/Guests attending: Vera and Allen Lawyer, Sharon Lawyer, Tami Brennan

Sharon asked if the board was planning on making a presentation as a remote overview like they do at the School Board meeting. Josh said that they haven't prepared one, that they had just prepared to go over any questions or items that needed explanation at this Informational Meeting.

Josh said that the reason that the General Budget increased is mainly because the board rolled the items that are non-negotiable items into the budget itself instead of stand-alone items that must pass. Items such as Ambulance Fee, Fire Dept, Dispatch, Insurance, Franklin County Court Cost, etc. Josh said that it's not like asking for a vote on \$10,000.00 for paving because if they gets voted down, we don't pave. These other items are things that the town has no say in and we must pay as not to pay these things is not legal. John said that as far as the Ambulance, we are just following the terms of the contract, which, thank God we signed that before and the rates were set, since everything is costing so much more to provide services.

Vera said that there is also \$5,000.00 included this year toward the next External Audit as that is being required to be done on a regular basis, which is also a non-negotiable. We have to do this because we have no choice.

Josh said that nothing about the Road and General budget can be changed on Town Meeting Day as we are voting by Australian ballot. Josh said we don't have, and haven't had, the power to change anything since the day the ballot was warned. He said the only thing people can do is vote yes or no. He said if the budget gets voted down, it will be really tough to make any cuts.

Josh said there is about a 6% increase for road and about a 6%-7% increase for the General Fund. Josh said that he wants to point out that on page 9-12, the 4th column of the budget shows what we actually spent in 2023, that is not the proposed budget. That column is what we used to decide what to budget for that item for 2024.

The Brigham Residence budgeted expense of \$250.00 is a place holder for a line item as money that we spent and that we get reimbursed for. Lance said that over \$40,000.00 has been submitted for reimbursement, and we can expect about \$45,000.00, but like FEMA, you can't guarantee when it will come. He said this is money that goes in and out of the town but not gathered from the local folks. Lance said that over the whole project, it may cost the

town about \$3,000.00 total. Lance said that the town does have an obligation to do some in-kind work of around \$2,000.00, which is mostly the time that Lance has donated.

Gravel pit expense of \$15,000.00 is for us to update our Act 250 permit which is also no choice.

Lance said that the North Station needs a new roof due to the wind, it has sprung a leak and he's not sure if it's lifted. Lance said that we have definitely gotten our money's worth out of it. It's lasted a long time. Lance said that he brought it up so people can be aware and understand.

Josh asked if there were any questions or comments on the Road Account? Josh said that you will notice that the total budget on page 12 is \$465,000.00, but that doesn't reflect the 40,000.00 that we expect from the State. That is why we are asking \$425,000.00 on the ballot.

Josh said that the Health Insurance on page 12 looks like it is increasing but that is because we have anticipated roll over employees. We don't want to short ourselves if an employee leaves mid-year and we don't know if the new employee will need insurance. It is better to have it and not use it than to need it and not have it.

Josh said that the Road budget has not really gone up that much. John said that all costs have gone up and things are heading north again on the prices.

Sharon asked if they could elaborate on Shop Expense. Lance said that would be expenditures that would include clean up equipment, rags, etc. He said we cut that budget item by \$2314.09 for 2024. He said we are trying to squeeze where we can because we know that we're going have to spend in other places. He said it's a guessing game to a degree. He said that we don't have the gravel pit payment but increases in everything else covers that. \$15,000.00 went right back for the Act 250 permit which will hopefully just be a one-year expense. We have to renew the permit for rock crushing. He said it depends on how much the state will allow us to expand. If they give us a narrow margin, then we will need to renew sooner. Lance said we are digging in Zone 1 this year and Zone 2 next year. He said that they found out that the depth of gravel wasn't as deep as the engineer said that it was. Then the gravel needed for the FEMA event took a lot of gravel out of there. Sharon asked how long they expected the pit to last. Lance said it is hard to predict but it should last several more years. Sharon asked what would happen after that. Lance said we would be back to buying gravel which will be more than the loan payments were. Josh said that the town could sell that land to help pay for the gravel. He said that he thinks it is ten-acre zoning. Lance said the front acreage would be more valuable than the back acreage.

Josh said that we can answer questions at Town Meeting, but nothing can be changed. We haven't been able to change anything since January 23 when the budget was warned. We aren't supposed to discuss it as it could be called polling while the vote is going on. If someone has a concern than the budget meetings were the time to come since we can't change it after it is submitted. Josh said we are budgeting for this current year in March and don't get the money until October. He said that we tried to do an increase of 6 months to get us a little closer to budgeting for the following year, but it was voted down. Vera said that if we were on a budget where we collected tax money in October for the following year, then we could have multiple payments a year, but we can't while we are so far into the year that we have budgeted for because the money is already spent.

Lance said that it is a little disappointing that in a town of 1000 voters, only 3 residents show up for the informational meeting.

Sharon said that you can look at it as the residents trust you, but then you can also get those who just look at the budget and vote off their feelings which I hope doesn't happen. Sharon said that she really has no other questions, that she knows all the costs have gone up and she trusts the board that they have done the best that we can do.

John made the motion to close the Informational Meeting on the for 2024. Lance seconded the motion and the motion carried with a vote of 3-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:38pm.

Meeting minutes were recorded by Tami Brennan.