

HARTSVILLE/TROUSDALE COUNTY METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT

BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 3, 2022 | 6:00PM | TC COURTHOUSE

MINUTES

Members Present:

Dwight Jewell

Beverly Atwood

Ken Buckmaster

Shane Burton

Gary Claridy

Bill Fergusson

Jerry Ford

T. Bubba Gregory

Landon Gulley

Richard Harsh

Mayor Stephen Chambers

Amy Thomas, Budget Director

Members Absent: Rachel Jones and Gary Walsh

Others in attendance: Dr. Clint Satterfield, Cindy Carman, Jason Sullivan, Chris Gregory, Lesley Overman, Branden Bellar, Ray Russell, Barbara Towns, Rita Crowder, and members of the community.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Chairman Dwight Jewell. Quorum was determined with 12 present / 2 absent.

Minutes from the January 11, 2022 meeting were supplied for reference on the topics at hand.

Discussions

1. ARPA Spending

Mayor Chambers proposed bonuses to County employees. He stressed that this was only an introduction to the thought and there were still several details that needed to be worked out. The original proposal was a flat bonus of \$3,000 to full time employees and \$1,500 to part time employees. This would be offered to the employees of the County General, Urban Services, Solid Waste, Ambulance, and Water & Sewer departments and exclude Elected Officials. We are able to offer this compensation due to the release of the Final Rule of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. The Final Rule alleviated several restrictions of the funding, and we are now able to propose a flat bonus as opposed to the previously mentioned Premium Pay to specific employees.

Schools are currently not included in the original proposal because they received their own funding (ESSR).

Dr. Satterfield stated that he will be paying the certified teachers who had not missed no more than 10 working days \$1,000 at the end of the school year. The ESSR funding was tied to several guidelines and must be linked to student outcomes. He felt he it would be difficult to justify the noncertified compensation. He has received 3 ESSR fundings over the past year. The noncertified are not being included in the ESSR funding. He may revisit at the end of the year to see if the schools can fund noncertified employee compensation.

Commissioner Shane Burton stated that the TN Comptroller had sent out a video earlier this week that stated several steps are necessary to spend the ARPA funding. He referred to the Premium Pay guidelines. Mayor Chambers answered with more explanation of the Final Rule and now being able to take a standard allowance. Mayor also listed other projects being discussed for the ARPA funding.

2. Compensation Study

Chairman Jewell directed the Committee to continue the idea of implementing the finding from the recent compensation study. *[See presentations from the January 11, 2022 Budget Committee and the September 24, 2021 Personnel Committee meetings]*

In the past years, raises or increases were very sporadic. Implementing the system provided by Burris, Thompson and Associates (BTA) would put the County on a consistent program and have a plan going forward. .

Mayor Chambers and Chairman Jewell both accept and support the data presented by BTA. The current study does include the Water Department and excludes the Schools and Highway Departments Road superintendent Bill Scruggs told Mayor Chambers that he did not want to be

included in the study. Commissioner Bill Fergusson noted that the schools were not included and asked how this would affect the 72 noncertified employees. Mayor Chambers stated that he had contacted all departments within the County and included those that wanted to be included in the study. It was said the Dr. Satterfield did not see the need for schools to be included in the study but did want the information of who was doing the study for future reference. Fergusson reiterated that the noncertified deserve to be included in the decision.

Chairman Jewell asked the Schools to look into a comparison of surrounding systems concerning the pay for the noncertified including bus drivers and janitorial staff.

Mayor would like for the new compensation to take effect for the upcoming FY2023 budget year. Fergusson reiterated that we are losing employees and would like to be proactive in this endeavor. We need to address these issues, but do not want to be in a situation where we are not prepared.

Commissioner Jerry Ford pointed out that surrounding areas have more revenue streams than HTC. He wasn't confident that the County could support the idea.

Sheriff Ray Russell and EMA/EMS Director Matt Batey described the hardships they were having in their respective departments. Both said the County needs to be more competitive in what they can offer to employees. They understood that we couldn't do better than the bigger counties and cities, but we could try to be more appealing.

Ford asked if we were to do the ARPA bonuses now, would that appease the employees that are considering leaving. Mayor Chambers restated the guidelines of the ARPA bonus and said it could help retain current employees. Chairman Jewell said it could be seen as an incentive until the FY23 budget was put in place.

Ford said to include the noncertified in the ARPA bonus. Mayor Chambers stated that the Commission cannot dictate how the Schools use their funding. The Commission may only set local revenue amounts.

Commissioner Landon Gulley expressed his concerns for the rising costs of the compensation system over the years. Jewell said the annual increase could be adjusted each year and not a set increase. The Commission would take the current financial position into consideration of what the percentage would be. Gulley wants to be upfront with the employees and make sure they are not counting on a set percentage every year. The process would need to be explained and clearly stated.

Chairman Jewell briefly reviewed the growth of property tax revenues and the sales tax revenues. Revenues are trending upward, and implementation may not require a tax increase. Ford said it may not be a problem now, but 3-4 years down the road it could be an enormous increase. The compensation system could be a snowball effect.

Gulley supported Fergusson's thought that the increases need to happen immediately for the first responder employees. Fergusson said that this plan would support the idea for constant wage increases. Gulley requested numbers from Wilson, Sumner, and Macon counties for the EMS and Law Enforcement agencies. Gulley is agreeable to the ARPA Bonus because it is a one time event. Would like to discuss the compensation system more before going forward.

Committee requested numbers from Dr. Satterfield concerning the noncertified for both the ARPA bonus funding and to begin the discussion for noncertified compensation increases.

3. Public Comment

Commission Mary Ann Baker commented that the decision is taking too long and is being kicked down the road. The Commissioners have had the data since September or October. A decision needs to be made.

4. Adjourn

Ford made the motion to adjourn, second by Gulley. 7:56pm