

City of Port Orford
City Council rural fire District Contract Workshop
In the Gable Chambers
Thursday, November 21, 2019

Mayor and Council	Present	City Staff	Present
<i>Gary Burns</i>	X	<i>Terrie Richards, City Admin/Recorder</i>	X
<i>Tim Pogwizd, Mayor</i>	Excused	<i>David Johnson, Finance Director</i>	X
<i>Pat Cox, President</i>	X		
<i>Jim Campbell</i>	X		
<i>James Garratt</i>	X		
<i>Carolyn LaRoche</i>	X		
<i>Travis Williams</i>	Excused		

Media Present:

Others Present: 4

1. Call to Order

President Cox called to order this workshop of the Common Council in the City of Port Orford Gable Chambers on Thursday, November 21, 2019 at 3:00.

2. Councilor Discussion:

Councilor Garratt requested that City Council begin a discussion regarding the request by Port Orford Fire Department to renegotiate the contract. Contract renewal can be time consuming, thus council needs to begin. A discussion was held with Dave Johnson about financial feasibility and various other topics. He feels this will be decided in multiple stages. First council will have to decide what they want to do and then will have to determine if and how it can be done. Consequences to the city will have to be considered before making decisions. Council will have to consider accepting the renegotiated proposal and pay the fee or not accept the contract, at which point Port Orford will have to find a new way of providing fire protection services to the city of Port Orford or submit a counter proposal.

Pat identifies that the city is paying almost 34,000 currently and the Fireboard is asking for a sizeable increase. Council would like to see justification for the increase prior to negotiating an agreement. It is council's due diligent to justify the increase to avoid taxation without representation.

Councilor Garratt advised that the Fireboard is hoping to be invited to a workshop or council meeting to discuss the increase. Councilor Garratt stated that a major use for the increased funds is to provide additional incentives to volunteers in the form of larger compensation for each callout and perhaps more compensation for training time spent. Currently one of the larger challenges is finding volunteers. The fire department has equipment but is lacking volunteers to operate the equipment.

Councilor Cox asked Councilor Garratt if the fire department is interested in negotiating. Councilor Garratt was not able to answer but did report that the fireboard spent at least over two years putting the contract together, and it was not a rash decision. He advised council to build some basis on which to negotiate. The tax increase involves the county, where the majority of services are for the city. The people in the county would like to see the citizens in the city pay their fair share. The performance of the fire department directly effects the citizen's insurance rates.

Councilor Cox requested how other areas compare with the tax rates for fire control in town and out of town. Mr. Johnson advised that it is generally a city fire department that is contracting with the rural fire department. He identifies if the contract was based on a rate per thousand instead of CPI it would stay a little more equitable with what the people in the district pay. He suggested the amount of increase the fire department is asking, it might be more feasible for the city to start their own fire department, stating in ten years it would be all paid back and the city would have control over how the fire department spends the money, which the city does not have now. However, the problem finding volunteers would be compounded.

Councilor Burns understands the cost would go from 33,745 to 50,000, being a 16,210 dollar increase a year. It is argued that the fire department is asking for a rate of 83 cents/1000, which comes up to 73,748 dollars, which is a 50 percent increase. President Cox discussed that to be responsible to the citizens of Port Orford, more information will have to be obtained. This will have to be finalized before next budget session, which is approximately only six months.

Councilor Garratt proposes that council asks the Fireboard to attend the next meeting and then have another workshop. President Cox suggests waiting for January due to December being difficult on schedules preventing time enough for preparation. Councilor Garratt presented the idea of a smaller committee meet with the fire department for a more informal discussion; however, it is important not to form a quorum. A bullet point list of topics and/or questions can be prepared so the fire department can come prepared to address the topics and answer the questions.

An addition to the Regular Meeting agenda is in order. President Cox suggested a list of concerns to put into a letter can be established in a workshop at the December meeting.

Councilor LaRoche is in favor of going into negotiations with the Fireboard. In order to negotiate, information on why they want the large increase needs to be provided by the Fireboard. Councilor LaRoche asks if the city owns the equipment in the City Hall building. John reported that the city agreed take on the volunteers and after three years the equipment would be titled to the district since the city at the time was paying 28 cents a thousand versus 1.28 for the district. John is not speaking on behalf of the board.

Council agrees to ask the fire department to bring in some budgets and information to justify why they are asking for the increase. Council agrees to one more workshop at the December meeting to compose a letter inviting the Fireboard to a January meeting. Council agrees to the plan.

Adjourned

There being no further business, President Cox adjourned the workshop at 3:27.



Pat Cox, Council President

Attest:



Terrie Richards, City Recorder