



Special Common Council Agenda

Tuesday, May 17, 2022 @ 7:00 PM

415 Main Street, Onalaska WI 54650

Meeting in person in Council Chambers & remotely on Zoom

AMENDED

Members of the public wishing to attend remotely and provide public input:

Meeting Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85153575099?pwd=ZGILZUR2UWlxQzJpRzJFVWgxeWk3UT09>

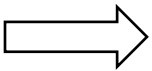
Phone Number: 1-312-626-6799 Meeting ID: 851 5357 5099 Password: 54650

1. Call to Order and roll call.
2. Approval of minutes from the previous meeting.
3. Public Input (limited to 3 minutes per individual).
4. Establishing Council budget goals and objectives for 2023 budget.

5. **CLOSED SESSION:**

To consider a motion to convene in Closed Session under Section 19.85(1)(c) of the Wisconsin Statutes for the purpose of considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility:

- Goals for City Administrator



To consider a motion to convene in Closed Session under Section 19.85 (1)(e) of the Wisconsin Statutes for the purpose of deliberating or negotiating the purchasing of public properties, the investing of public funds, or conducting other specified public business, whenever competitive or bargaining reasons require a closed session.

2023 Contract Negotiations:

- IAFF, International Association of Firefighters, Local 127
- OPPA, Onalaska Professional Police Association
- SORD, Supervisory Officers Relation Division

If any action is required in Open Session, as the result of the Closed Session, the Council will reconvene in Open Session to take the necessary action and/or continue on with the printed agenda.

6. Adjournment.

Notice is hereby given that members of and possibly a quorum of members of other governmental bodies may attend this meeting to gather information about a subject over which they have decision making responsibility. No action will be taken by any governmental body at the above stated meeting other than the governmental body specifically referred to above in this notice.

Notices also provided to: Common Council (Ald. Leanne Stokes, Ald. Tom Smith, Ald. Dan Stevens, Ald. Diane Wulf, Ald. Steven Nott, Ald. Larry Jiracek), Mayor Kim Smith, City Administrator Eric Rindfleisch, Department Heads, Media

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the City of Onalaska will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with a disability to ensure equal access to public meetings provided notification is given to the City Clerk within seventy-two (72) hours prior to the public meeting and that the requested accommodation does not create an undue hardship for the City.

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of the City of Onalaska**

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1

1 The Special Meeting of the Common Council was called to order at 7:10 p.m. on Tuesday, May
2 17, 2022. It was noted that the meeting had been announced and a notice posted at City Hall.

3
4 Roll call was taken, with the following members present: Mayor Kim Smith, Ald. Tom Smith,
5 Ald. Dan Stevens, Ald. Leanne Stokes, Ald. Larry Jiracek, Ald. Diane Wulf.

6
7 Also Present: City Administrator Eric Rindfleisch, City Clerk JoAnn Marcon, City Attorney
8 Amanda Jackson, City Engineer Jarrod Holter, Interim Financial Services Director/Treasurer
9 Karen Marquardt, Human Resource Manager Amy Frandsen, Parks and Recreation Director Dan
10 Wick.

11
12 Excused Absence: Ald. Steven Nott.

13
14 A quorum of the Administrative & Judiciary Committee, Board of Public Works & Utilities
15 Committee and Finance & Personnel Committee were present for this meeting.

16
17 **Item 2 – Approval of minutes from the previous meeting**

18
19 Motion by Ald. Stevens, second by Ald. T. Smith, to approve the minutes from the previous
20 meeting as printed and on file in the City Clerk’s Office.

21
22 On voice vote, motion carried.

23
24 **Item 3 – Public Input: (limited to 3 minutes/individual)**

25
26 Mayor K. Smith called three times for anyone wishing to provide public input and closed that
27 portion of the meeting.

28
29 **Item 4 – Establishing Council budget goals and objectives for 2023 budget**

30
31 City Administrator Rindfleisch noted he had distributed to Councilmembers a copy of a paper
32 memo he had written, and he read said memo into the record:

33
34 *“First, congratulations to all the newly elected and re-elected Council members! One of the*
35 *most important policy decisions you will make, and probably the most important policy*
36 *document you will approve in the coming year, is the 2023 budget.*

37
38 *As per our ordinance, it is the responsibility of the City Administrator to present to Council a*
39 *budget proposal for the next year; the Council then amends and approves that proposal as the*
40 *official 2023 budget, subject to Mayor veto. Over the next six months staff will work diligently to*
41 *propose a budget to you which meets your goals and objectives, and is balanced as required by*
42 *statute. For the process to be successful, I will need the budgetary goals and objectives of the*

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43 *Council so that the proposal given to you later this year is as representative of your wishes as*
44 *possible, as this will ultimately be your 2023 budget.*

45
46 *I offer the following general questions to assist with establishing your goals this evening:*

- 47
48 1. *Do you have any new initiatives or staffing requests for 2023 which are not currently in*
49 *the 2022 Budget?*
50 2. *Are there any current programs in the 2022 Budget that you would like to see increased*
51 *or decreased in 2023?*
52 3. *Do you have a preferred methodology for implementing increases and decreases*
53 *(program specific, across the board, program/department prioritization, etc.)?*
54 4. *List any general goal statement you would like the Council to use to direct the*
55 *preparation of the Administrator's budget.*

56
57 *The current economic environment will make the preparation of the 2023 budget the most*
58 *difficult one in recent times. The 12-month CPI is extremely high (8.3% in April, 8.5% in*
59 *March). Interest rates, while climbing, are still relatively low making our interest income*
60 *still minimal. State-imposed budgetary caps are still in place (levy limits and expenditure*
61 *restraints). State aids are relatively fixed as we are in the second year of the State's*
62 *biennial budget. While we are still growing, our net new construction will likely not be*
63 *high. In the General Fund, wages and benefits can make up 70% to 80% of the expenditures.*
64 *All these variables impact the budget that can be passed, and I am happy to discuss them in*
65 *greater detail tonight. However, if we were to follow our past budgeting practices, I believe we*
66 *are already facing a budgetary shortfall in 2023. Therefore, in order to propose a balanced*
67 *budget, the Council should also discuss:*

- 68
69 1. *To what degree should the Administrator use the following to present a balanced budget*
70 *to the Council?*
71 a. *Program and service cuts*
72 b. *Staff reductions*
73 c. *Reduced COLA adjustments*
74 d. *Reduced performance pay increases*
75 e. *Revenue enhancements*

76
77 *I look forward to our discussion this evening.”*

78
79 Ald. Stevens said, “Given the nature where this is a chance for alders to give input on their
80 individual thoughts on what the budget should look like, and how to direct the City
81 Administrator to form the budget, I’m going to suggest that maybe we go round robin and have
82 everybody have their chance to speak their mind.”

83
84 Ald. Wulf noted each Councilmember had stated what he or she believed were the most pressing
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85 issues for the 2022 Budget during the May 2021 Special Common Council meeting, and she said
86 she is open to any format this evening.

87
88 City Administrator Rindfleisch told Councilmembers he believes it is important for them to
89 discuss what they believe should be prioritized, and he noted there still are several unknown
90 variables such as health insurance rates, fuel costs, and if the State of Wisconsin will offer any
91 type of assistance. City Administrator Rindfleisch said, “Is it possible to increase? Probably not.
92 But if we are able to, where would you like to see those increases? I still think it’s valuable to
93 have that conversation as to what the Council [believes] those priorities are, and what you would
94 like to see, obviously contingent upon our budgetary constraints as we proposed. That gives me
95 the greatest guidance. Again, tonight we’re not looking at a balanced budget [because] there’s
96 far too much unknown and we just started the process. We have six months to go before we get
97 there. This is not to balance that budget. It is just to offer the insight so I can present a budget
98 that fits most of your needs.”

99
100 Mayor K. Smith asked City Administrator Rindfleisch if he has any ideas for initiatives that he
101 hoped to introduce for 2023 that perhaps he is now a little more reluctant to bring forward.

102
103 City Administrator Rindfleisch said, “For 2022 ... the conversation has been to increase staffing
104 in Parks and Rec; in particular, in the Parks Department. That is actually one of the goals that
105 perhaps we’ll be discussing later this evening about how to do that. If there is any initiative for
106 2023, it is to follow through on that commitment to try to look at ways of increasing that staff. It
107 has been an ongoing goal impacting from the previous round of layoffs. I think if there is any
108 new initiative, it’s really the same initiative: to find ways to continue forward with that.”

109
110 Ald. Wulf addressed Item No. 1 in City Administrator Rindfleisch’s memo regarding potential
111 new initiatives or staffing requests currently not in the 2022 Budget, stating that based on
112 conversations she has had with staff members and the reports she has heard at various
113 committee, commission, and board meetings, she still supports and wishes to see some type of
114 staffing increase in the Parks Department. Ald. Wulf said that while she does not remember the
115 exact statistics, she believes the Parks Department had experienced a 23-percent decrease in
116 funding. Ald. Wulf said, “I don’t remember if that was over a two-year period of time, but I
117 know with this last budget that’s the number I came up with.” Ald. Wulf noted past Councils
118 have made public safety the top priority, and she said, “There are a lot of other departments at
119 City Hall that keep City Hall running. I will always support public safety, but we have to keep in
120 mind that there are a lot of other departments that also need help. I will be speaking very
121 favorably in some type of additional funding for Parks.

122
123 I’m also dismayed to hear the continual lots of hours up at the Omni Center. I would like to see
124 if we could possibly explore ... I haven’t had a chance to talk with Dan about this at all, [but] I
125 would like to possibly hear if there is need for any additional hours or positions or whatever at
126 the Omni Center because it sounds like they’re working an awful lot of hours. The Omni Center

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127 is finally in the black. I would hate to burn more people out like we've had when we were
128 talking about the Police and Fire Department previously before we funded those six positions.”

129
130 Ald. T. Smith stated staffing in the Parks and Recreation Department has been his number one
131 priority, and he said, “I think we've heard that many times. I'm disappointed that we weren't
132 able to find some kind of funding this year to [provide some assistance]. I'm also worried about
133 staff burnout. I know that they're working a lot, and we are hopefully returning into [being] in
134 the black, so we don't want to go backwards. The first thing that comes to my mind is finding a
135 way to increase funding for Park and Rec, even if it means maybe a deficit in some other
136 departments to offset that. Sometimes what we've had in the past ... We may have to cut in
137 some other areas, or maybe across the board, to fund some of the Park and Rec because I think
138 right now, in my opinion, it is the most bleeding department.

139
140 We took care of [the] Police and Fire [Departments]. [They are] not where they need to be, but I
141 think we've done a lot in the last couple years with that, and we've tried to [be accommodating].
142 But now I think ... the message is we need to find some additional resources for Park and Rec or
143 we're going to have some bigger issues than we have today.”

144
145 Ald. Stokes said, “I agree that we do need to look at Park and Rec. I have a problem, though,
146 with the wording [that] public safety may not always be first priority. I personally think that we
147 need to keep public safety of all the departments – not just Police and Fire, but anyone else who
148 does anything that could in some way jeopardize them going home at night. I think that needs to
149 come first. I also know through conversations with the employees [in the] Park and Rec
150 [Department] – both inside the office and at events – that they are the most resilient group of
151 people that I have met. I agree that they are putting in a lot of hours, but they also seem to have
152 a really good outlook on what they're trying to do for the community, and that comes into play
153 too. I would love to find a way to do both.”

154
155 Ald. Stevens said he would like to have the following five points considered for the upcoming
156 budget:

157
158 1. **Equity on payroll.** Ald. Stevens said, “If you remember the process we went through
159 after the wage study and we had to find money to try to fund as much as we could up to
160 par, I think we were a little bit short. I think our first priority is to kind of pick up the
161 torch where we left it from last year. And to do that ... we have a few options. Given
162 that we're going into an extraordinarily high inflationary year where the normal COLA
163 and step increases are a little bit more aggressive than what we've had in the past, I think
164 we should consider not wiping out, but [rather] restraining those avenues until we bring
165 the bottom rung up of the people that we have identified as being underpaid. We want to
166 bring that up to par.”

167 2. **Addressing staffing shortfalls in the Parks Department and at the Omni Center:**
168 Ald. Stevens said, “The Omni Center is an Enterprise Fund. And, as Alder Wulf had

169 pointed out, [the Omni Center] is operating in the black. I think we may have a little bit
170 more opportunity there to expand or make the manhours a little bit more flexible that
171 between Mr. Wick and Justin [Omni Center Event Coordinator Justin Swartling], they
172 can manage to keep the Omni Center operating at peak hours and avoid burnout. I would
173 love it if we could get more hours in the Parks Department. But until we get some better
174 numbers, or if our net new construction becomes fabulous, in my mind I think it's going
175 to be very difficult to do that unless we start making some cuts – potentially staffing cuts
176 – in other departments. That is not a direction I want to go. So far, it sounds like we're
177 unanimous that is where the greatest needs are. Given the general macroeconomic
178 environment, I would love to get more help for Parks because they did take the biggest
179 cut, and they've been doing a lot with the little bit of resources that we've given them. I
180 don't expect that they're going to be able to do that forever, but they've done a great
181 job.”

182 3. **The Omni Center's long-term financial viability:** Ald. Stevens said, “I really want to
183 avoid a future scenario where we are ... Right now, we're operating in the black, but if in
184 the future we're not, there is a fund that kind of protects the general tax levy. I know the
185 COVID year, other communities that have operated a convention center have really
186 [taken a financial hit], and that got passed on to the taxpayers. I want to inoculate our
187 taxpayers as much as possible. The only way we can do that is either to make sure we
188 continue to operate in the black or beef up that fund. You would do that through some of
189 the revenue created from the Enterprise Fund.”

190 4. **If the City of Onalaska does not have the ability to be expansive and create new**
191 **programs, opportunities, or projects, it needs to stick to maintenance:** Ald. Stevens
192 said, “If we can't build a new road, can we crack-seal it? We should prioritize protecting
193 our infrastructure as much as we can to get through the high inflationary environment.”

194 5. Ald. Stevens said, “This is kind of not a must-have, but I think it's good to have
195 flexibility. I know that there's an increasingly small bonus that municipalities get with
196 the expenditure restraint, and it seems like it's getting kind of ridiculously low. Other
197 municipalities use a model like ... for example, Sun Prairie alternates years where they
198 sacrifice the expenditure restraint and kind of address their long-term financial needs. I
199 don't know if this is the right year or if it's even the answer at all, but I think that we
200 should explore any financial alternatives that we have. It might make it tougher next
201 year, but if it solves some problems this year and makes us better off long term, I would
202 like to see the numbers.”

203
204 Ald. Stevens said he sympathizes with City Administrator Rindfleisch as, “It's going to be very
205 difficult to do what we want to do based off of ... Even with a very positive net new
206 construction, the expenses from the increased salary and just general inflation is, I think, going to
207 exceed what we would normally have for that increase. Not a fun year. There is never a fun
208 year when you're dealing with budgets, but this one is tough.”

209
210 Ald. Jiracek said there seems to be support for assisting the Parks Department based on this

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211 evening's discussion, and that he is supportive of that. Ald. Jiracek said, "Every organization
212 needs more people most of the time." Ald. Jiracek shared with Councilmembers a telephone
213 conversation he had had with his daughter, who told him she had had to terminate 120
214 employees, and he said, "We may have to do some cuts with personnel. I don't know; I haven't
215 gotten into those numbers. [My daughter] works for a major bank, and they're cutting back
216 drastically because the economy is pretty lousy right now. I can fully understand your position
217 as far as possibly having to make those decisions in the near future. The only thing I've been
218 hearing a lot here is maintenance on the buildings; [specifically], the air conditioner and things
219 like that. Those are things we have to address because we're looking at, what, 30 months out in
220 some cases trying to get the equipment in, so it's something we have to do right now. The only
221 other thing that I would really like to see is something with the acoustical engineer in [the
222 Common Council Chambers]. It's kind of my pet project right now."

223

224 Mayor K. Smith asked Ald. Jiracek to repeat the final item he had mentioned.

225

226 Ald. Jiracek said he wants to address the acoustical engineer.

227

228 Ald. Wulf said that is why she has her laptop, and she that she agrees that the audio in the
229 Council Chambers is substandard. Ald. Wulf next addressed Ald. Stokes' previous comments
230 and said, "My position always is to support public safety, and past Councils have always done
231 that. I will continue to do that. But when you look at past budgets and you look at the pieces of
232 the pie, there's all these other departments that also have to function. Yes, Police and Fire, I
233 think typically most people think that's at the top. But there's all these other departments that
234 also function here to serve our citizens. They also have to have some part of the pie. That was
235 my only point."

236

237 Ald. Stokes told Ald. Wulf she knows that she always has supported public safety, and she said,
238 "My point was simply that I don't think that the public safety feature ever should take a backseat
239 no matter what department it is, and it's not just Police and Fire. There's a lot of things that are
240 done in the Public Works area. There are safety factors. My thinking is it needs to be safety first
241 – not always doing it at the expense of the other departments, but [rather] in conjunction with the
242 other departments."

243

244 Mayor K. Smith next addressed the second item on City Administrator Rindfleisch's memo,
245 asking Councilmembers if there are any current programs in the 2022 Budget they would like to
246 see increased or decreased in 2023.

247

248 Ald. Stokes said, "There is one that I was speaking to a department head, and I had asked him if
249 this would be possible. What I'm talking about is when a developer comes in for a new
250 development and they give a certain area of land for the park ... In the past, I don't think they
251 have had to do anything else except give the land – they didn't have to actually develop it in any
252 way at all. The department head had told me there is a new development on Sand Lake [Road]

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253 where the developer is going to develop a series of trails and other things to make it so that the
254 city doesn't have to be responsible for doing that to make it a viable park area. I would like to
255 see that developed more with and have them have more responsibilities other than just giving a
256 plot of land, and as part of their development costs."

257

258 Ald. Stevens stated he supports the continuance of the watering program for the flower baskets,
259 with the caveat that Centering Onalaska, a 501(c)3, bears the cost of the watering.

260

261 Mayor K. Smith next addressed the third item on City Administrator Rindfleisch's memo, asking
262 Councilmembers if they have a preferred methodology for implementing increases and
263 decreases.

264

265 Ald. Stevens stated he believes any decreases in positions should be strongly avoided and said, "I
266 think the better way to handle this is if everyone shares the pain, then nobody gets particularly
267 hornswoggled. The way we would do that is by controlling ... We're taking a more conservative
268 approach on both the COLA and the performance pay increases."

269

270 Ald. T. Smith stated he agrees with Ald. Stevens that he also does not want to see staff
271 reductions. Ald. T. Smith told Ald. Jiracek that while he understands his point of view that
272 sometimes staff reductions are necessary, "hopefully it will be one of our last options. I think it
273 causes a lot of ripple effects. We want to keep good employees, and [also] keep good morale.
274 When you start going down that path, it can be a rocky road. I think if we do anything, to be fair,
275 across-the-board cuts is my preference. That's what I'm used to doing. If we have to come up
276 with some money, looking at it across the board from a fairness perspective and knowing that
277 there are going to be a few exceptions, but we definitely have to sort that out. I definitely think
278 reducing the COLA adjustment, reducing performance pay improvements increases is definitely
279 an area we could look at, as much as I wouldn't like to do that. I think staff reductions should be
280 the last resort.

281

282 [Regarding] revenue enhancements, I don't know what that is. But if there's any way we can
283 start finding more ways to bring in more money that we don't have today and brainstorm some
284 suggestions, that might help offset some of these deficiencies."

285

286 Ald. Stokes stated she also does not want to see staff reductions, and she said she agrees that it
287 might be prudent to examine COLA adjustments. Ald. Stokes said, "I'm not really in favor of
288 reducing performance pay increases simply because when you tell somebody that I want you to
289 do a really good job, but the performance staff increases go away. I would prefer to use the
290 COLA and not to use the performance."

291

292 Ald. Jiracek said, "It is going to be a tough decision to determine whether or not to cut the
293 COLA down and keep people on, or to try to keep COLA up. It's a decision that's going to be
294 pretty tough going into next year. I would like to see a program where we could have a staff

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295 member do a lot more grants. Grants would bring in additional funding. There are so many
296 different grants out there that you almost need a specialist to come in and look at that procedure
297 for any type of grant that's out there – we really don't know.”

298

299 Ald. Wulf said, “The City of Onalaska has always been a lean organization. I do not foresee us
300 ... I would prefer that we are not looking at any cuts. As far as revenue enhancements, I'm
301 assuming that would be an increase in fees – it's code word for that.”

302

303 Mayor K. Smith next addressed the fourth item on City Administrator Rindfleisch's memo,
304 asking Councilmembers if there is a general goal statement they would like to utilize to direct the
305 preparation of the Administrator's budget.

306

307 Ald. T. Smith said he believes attempting to hold down the mill rate should be a goal, and he
308 stated, “One of the things that this Council has [been] since I've been [serving] is [it has] been
309 very sensitive to increasing taxes. Property taxes is one of the biggest things we hear about. If
310 you're a homeowner and with [prices increasing], and now [the city is] reappraising, I have a
311 feeling we're going to hear a lot more [feedback] when people get their new assessments. I think
312 anything we can do to keep that mill rate very conservative will be a plus because we may have
313 to do that just for the benefits of our property owners and people who are paying taxes to support
314 our services. That's our goal this year: to minimize the mill rate and not to exceed it to a certain
315 percentage. I don't know what that will be; I think it's 2 percent this year. I believe [it is] no
316 more than 2 percent; I can't remember exactly. The mill rate has to always be looking at what
317 impact of whatever we do with the mill rate. If it's going to increase the mill rate significantly,
318 or to a point where we can and can't, I think we have to be sensitive to that.”

319

320 Mayor K. Smith said the mill rate should not increase with the revaluation.

321

322 City Administrator Rindfleisch said, “In general, the mill rate is one that we have the least
323 amount of control over. It's the net dollar amounts that you levy. In most years, if your
324 properties are not being reassessed, any increase in tax will increase your mill rate because
325 you're just dividing out your total number of taxes by your total valuation to get your rate per
326 thousand. In this particular year with the assessments hitting, people will start seeing more
327 assessments on the mill rate. But the budget being the same should actually drag the mill rate
328 down. As more value comes in, the pie stays the same size, but it adds volume to that pie even
329 though it hasn't changed. Your slice would actually decrease in rising costs.

330

331 The problem is as how property tax bills go out, what often happens is that one of the taxing
332 entities will have a decrease in taxes – this happened to the city several times over the last
333 several years – but other tax _____ may have tax increases, but you only get one tax bill when
334 you pay your taxes. A third of that is your city tax bill. You can do great work and reduce the
335 mill rate, but overall, their final mill rate may increase and the tax bill may increase that way.
336 It's a[n odd] number to play with. It's something that is something to target because while we

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337 don't control it – well, the valuations are controlled – we can control that number by being
338 assertive with our budget numbers.”

339
340 Ald. Stokes said one of the questions she had asked constituents when she was canvassing is
341 what they like the best about living in the City of Onalaska, or why they had moved to the city.
342 Ald. Stokes said, “By far, the services that they were given is what they said, and the quality of
343 life that they can maintain. I think those two things, even though they're not monetary things,
344 they still should be in the back of people's minds because that's what the citizens are talking
345 about. If their taxes have to rise to keep the level of services the same – or if they don't want the
346 level of services to stay and they're willing to accept less services, but don't have the taxes go up
347 – you can't sometimes have both. But that is a general sentiment that I had throughout the time I
348 was out there.”

349
350 Ald. T. Smith asked City Administrator Rindfleisch if there are any programs that are running a
351 deficit and/or draining resources, and thus need further scrutinization.

352
353 City Administrator Rindfleisch told Ald. T. Smith the city's budget is doing “quite well” after a
354 quarter of the year, and he said, “We seem to be trending very well. Some of that is, while we
355 are inflationary and some of our expenses will go up, that's going to be across the board. ...
356 Every department – Police, Fire, Utilities – uses fuel. Those costs are increasing, and that's what
357 may lead us to problems going forward. But again, that's not program-specific; that's across the
358 board. [Regarding] personnel [and] individual departments, we've had some [employees leave]
359 and some sick time that were not budgeted for that may impact where we are in personnel. But
360 again, I think that's a one-off [and] it's not the general guidance that we have certain
361 departments that are bleeding red faster than any other department.

362
363 The concern is less 2022. If there is a concern, we may have to come back as things get more
364 expensive or lead times extend. Hopefully we don't have to come back to Council and ask for a
365 budget amendment. It's that jump as we approach ... contracts coming up as well as the rest of
366 the wages and benefit costs in 2023. But again, in my mind that's going to be more across the
367 board than it is to any individual program.”

368
369 Mayor K. Smith asked City Administrator Rindfleisch if there had been a positive budgetary
370 impact due to several of the fees being readjusted last year.

371
372 City Administrator Rindfleisch noted the fees had been adjusted, and he told Mayor K. Smith he
373 believes the city is net positive on them. City Administrator Rindfleisch also noted the city had
374 begun levying more of a flat fee for Special Event Permits, and he said, “I think net, we're
375 trending up. Certain departments like Inspection, we're definitely trending up with the adjusted
376 fees.”

377
378 Ald. Stokes noted she had written down something regarding the respect an employer has for an
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10

379 employee makes him/her want to remain at his/her place of employment. Ald. Stokes said that
380 while she has not fully formed her idea, she suggested perhaps establishing a committee with
381 rotating staff members who are not supervisors. Ald. Stokes said such a committee would allow
382 employees to express how they feel about where they work, their employer's strengths and
383 weaknesses, and what possibly could be changed. Ald. Stokes said, "It would take a lot of
384 fleshing out, but I think if you talk to people that sometimes don't have a voice because they're
385 not in a supervisory position or they just don't feel that way, it may sometimes flesh it out to the
386 point where they feel satisfied."

387

388 Mayor K. Smith said to Ald. Stokes, "What I'm hearing you say is that maybe one of the ...
389 going back to a general goal statement would be to include employees in the process of
390 determining if certain things need to be reduced in the budget."

391

392 Ald. Stokes said, "I suppose you could put it in that area because they actually live it every day.
393 We don't [because] we're not full-time [employees]."

394

395 Mayor K. Smith said that while she is hearing there should be employee involvement, she is not
396 hearing where that voice is supposed to come in.

397

398 Ald. Stokes said that while it could be a goal, perhaps it will not fit into a budgetary item.

399

400 Ald. Wulf asked Amy to address the Employee Engagement Team, suggesting that perhaps Ald.
401 Stokes' suggestion would be an ideal fit for team members. Ald. Wulf told Amy she was thrilled
402 to receive her memo regarding the EET, and she said she is appreciative of the engagement of all
403 the departments.

404

405 Amy told Ald. Stokes she had described the EET, which had been formed in October 2021 and is
406 comprised of approximately 10 employees from various departments, none of which are
407 supervisory or managerial staff members. Amy said she attends EET meetings as a bystander
408 who assists as a facilitator, and she told Councilmembers that EET members serve as liaisons
409 who review policies, plan events, and share ideas.

410

411 Mayor K. Smith asked Amy if she envisions a way that the EET could be utilized to help gauge
412 what would have the least impact on employee morale if the city is facing a difficult budget.

413

414 Amy told Mayor K. Smith yes and said EET members are charged with gathering input from
415 their respective departments and crafting ideas. Amy said, "When we're talking employee
416 engagement, we're talking about, when we have higher engaged employees we have higher
417 productivity, and we have higher buy-in. There is a lot of gain to be had from higher employee
418 engagement, so whatever thoughts and feedback that they have, they bring it back to their
419 spokesperson and they come together as a group and discuss it and come up with ideas."

420

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421 Ald. T. Smith asked Amy if there is a plan to rotate EET members so that multiple employees in
422 a department may participate.

423
424 Amy told Ald. T. Smith that employees are currently participating, and that a replacement would
425 be sought if employees are not participating. Amy said she believes the goal is to keep the EET
426 relatively small, and she told Ald. T. Smith, “If there’s ever an employee that would like to be a
427 member, we do put it out in our employee newsletter. We list who those employees are. We
428 haven’t had it formed for quite a year yet, so we haven’t had those discussions about rotating
429 staff just yet. But I imagine that will be something in the future.”

430
431 Ald. Jiracek asked Amy if there are notes from the meetings to which the elected officials would
432 have access.

433
434 Amy told Ald. Jiracek that “very loose notes” are taken, and she said he may have access to
435 those notes if he would like. Amy told Councilmembers they are welcome to attend the
436 meetings, which typically occur monthly. The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 24.

437
438 Ald. Jiracek asked Amy if there are meeting agendas.

439
440 Amy told Ald. Jiracek there is an agenda, with each EET member taking turns running meetings
441 and creating agendas.

442
443 Ald. Stokes thanked Amy for the information she had shared and said it was exactly what she
444 had envisioned. Ald. Stokes, who was elected in April, said she did not know about the
445 existence of the EET, and she stated she believes having such a team will go a long way toward
446 helping employees understand what is happening. Ald. Stokes added, “Even though there might
447 be things with the budget that they don’t like, at least they have a voice.”

448
449 Ald. Stevens referred to the 2022 budgetary process and said, “I’d really like to avoid if we get to
450 the point where there was a hole in the budget and then it fell to Council, I felt like we had to
451 kind of nitpick out of individual departments’ GLs and take \$50 out of Engineering’s paper
452 budget and then get there. I don’t know how we avoid that, but if it could be cleaner when it
453 comes to us, I would like to be in a position where Council is not micromanaging the individual
454 department budgets and having to take some of the flexibility that they have to move money in
455 between departments and self-manage. That’s my general goal.”

456
457 Ald. T. Smith asked City Administrator Rindfleisch if there are any departments that perhaps the
458 city could consider outsourcing in the long run. Ald. T. Smith said that while he understands
459 doing so would have ramifications, he wanted to bring it forward for discussion.

460
461 City Administrator Rindfleisch said, “The answer is anything that can be done in the private
462 sector, or there’s something being done in the private sector that, would be the best way to do

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463 that. The equation then comes to, can you get somebody from the private sector to do the tasks
464 the same amount of hours and the same amount of tasks you have to do at the same cost you
465 would pay otherwise? That's anything from Administrator on down to even public safety. If
466 you really wanted to look at it, it's anything that we do can be examined to find if there is a more
467 cost-effective way of doing so. Every department – nothing specifically comes to mind in terms
468 of, this is an obvious one. The ones that we looked at are the ones that we had the private sector
469 coming to us with proposals, and that had been Inspection in the last several years – we had a
470 much larger department that way. Even more recently, we privatized out that way for plan
471 review that we are now getting revenue from by the private sector. Those are the ones that when
472 we are made aware of someone that can do those things on our behalf, we can contract out.”

473

474 Mayor K. Smith asked the alderpersons and City Administrator Rindfleisch if there is anything
475 else they would like to bring up for discussion.

476

477 City Administrator Rindfleisch thanked Councilmembers for their input and said, “We weren't
478 going to have a balanced budget this evening. Really, [the purpose] was to get to the heart of,
479 what is the philosophy of this body so when I present the budget to you it's something that you
480 can approve or you can disapprove, and you don't have to go in and look at individual line-item
481 budgets. [Rather], it fits your overall philosophy of what you're looking for. Some of the items
482 we've heard multiple times are Park and Rec [and] public safety. You've also been very clear
483 when it comes to any shortfalls [to] maintain the staff we have, and [also] looking at ways of
484 being conservative when it comes to any wage increases.”

485

486 Mayor K. Smith said she believes the expenditure restraint limit and the cost-effective options
487 the city might or might not have will need to be explored once all the data has been obtained.

488

489 **Item 5 – CLOSED SESSION**

490

491 To consider a motion to convene in Closed Session under Section 19.85(1)(c) of the Wisconsin
492 Statutes for the purpose of considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance
493 evaluation data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or
494 exercises responsibility:

495

- 496 • Goals for City Administrator

497

498 To consider a motion to convene in Closed Session under Section 19.85(1)(e) of the Wisconsin
499 Statutes for the purpose of deliberating or negotiating the purchasing of public properties, the
500 investing of public funds, or conducting other specified public business, whenever competitive or
501 bargaining reasons require a closed session.

502

503 2023 Contract Negotiations:

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13

- 504 • IAFF, International Association of Firefighters, Local 127
- 505 • OPPA, Onalaska Professional Police Association
- 506 • SORD, Supervisory Officers Relation Division
- 507

508 If any action is required in Open Session, as the result of the Closed Session, the Council will
509 reconvene in Open Session to take the necessary action and/or continue on with the printed
510 agenda.

511
512 Motion by Ald. Stevens, second by Ald. Wulf, to convene in Closed Session.

513
514 On roll call vote: Ald. Diane Wulf – aye, Ald. Dan Stevens – aye, Ald. Tom Smith – aye, Ald.
515 Larry Jiracek – aye, Ald. Leanne Stokes – aye. In Closed Session at 8:05 p.m.

516
517 Motion by Ald. T. Smith, second by Ald. Jiracek, to reconvene in Open Session.

518
519 On roll call vote: Ald. Dan Stevens – aye, Ald. Diane Wulf – aye, Ald. Larry Jiracek – aye, Ald.
520 Tom Smith – aye, Ald. Leanne Stokes – aye. In Open Session at 9:53 p.m.

521
522 **Adjournment**

523
524 Motion by Ald. Wulf, second by Ald. T. Smith, to adjourn at 9:54 p.m.

525
526 On voice vote, motion carried.

527
528
529 Recorded by:

530
531 Kirk Bey



City of Onalaska

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Memo

To: Mayor and Common Council
From: Eric Rindfleisch
Date: May 17, 2022
Re: May Special Common Council Budget Goals Meeting

First, congratulations to all the newly elected and re-elected Council members! One of the most important policy decisions you will make, and probably the most important policy document you will approve in the coming year, is the 2023 budget.

As per our ordinance, it is the responsibility of the City Administrator to present to Council a budget proposal for the next year; the Council then amends and approves that proposal as the official 2023 budget, subject to Mayor veto. Over the next six months staff will work diligently to propose a budget to you which meets your goals and objectives, and is balanced as required by statute. For the process to be successful, I will need the budgetary goals and objectives of the Council so that the proposal given to you later this year is as representative of your wishes as possible, as this will ultimately be your 2023 budget.

I offer the following general questions to assist with establishing your goals this evening.

- 1. Do you have any new initiatives or staffing requests for 2023 which are not currently in the 2022 Budget?**
- 2. Are there any current programs in the 2022 Budget that you would like to see increased or decreased in 2023?**
- 3. Do you have a preferred methodology for implementing increases and decreases (program specific, across the board, program/department prioritization, etc.)?**
- 4. List any general goal statement you would like the Council to use to direct the preparation of the Administrator's budget.**

The current economic environment will make the preparation of the 2023 budget the most difficult one in recent times. The 12-month CPI is extremely high (8.3% in April, 8.5% in March). Interest rates, while climbing, are still relatively low making our interest income still minimal. State-imposed budgetary caps are still in place (levy limits and expenditure restraints). State aids are relatively fixed as we are in the second year of the State's biennial budget. While we are still growing, our net new construction will likely not be high. In the General Fund, wages and benefits can make up 70% to 80% of the expenditures. All these variables impact the budget that can be passed, and I am happy to discuss them in greater detail tonight. However, if we were to follow our past budgeting practices, I believe we are already facing a budgetary shortfall in 2023. Therefore, in order to propose a balanced budget, the Council should also discuss:

- 1. To what degree should the Administrator use the following to present a balanced budget to the Council?**
 - a. Program and service cuts**
 - b. Staff reductions**
 - c. Reduced COLA adjustments**
 - d. Reduced performance pay increases**
 - e. Revenue enhancements**

I look forward to our discussion this evening.



Eric Rindfleisch