Peaks Island Council
February 2013 Meeting Minutes (Approved)

Wednesday, February 27, 2013 at 6:30pm
MacVane Community Center
Budget Proposal Meeting

Councilors Present: Eric Eaton, Ted Kelleher (Treasurer), Cheryl Miner (Vice Chair), Mary Anne Mitchell, Marjorie Phyfe, Mike Sylvester (Chair), Jimal Thundershield

1. Introduction to Budget Discussion

Two documents were passed out to the public: 1) a white sheet with a proposed budget put together by Vice Chair Cheryl Miner; 2) a purple sheet with a slightly different proposed budget with fewer line items put together by Chair Mike Sylvester. Chair Sylvester invited each councilor to comment before specific discussion of budget proposal began. Councilor Mitchell asked that a short budget justification be added at the beginning of the document, before it is submitted to the City, emphasizing that the purpose of each budget item is to make life on the island more affordable. Chair Sylvester explained that the reason two proposed budgets were being circulated at this meeting was because the Council was not able to agree on one document prior to this meeting since it did not have a budget workshop as planned in early February. A member of the public commented that the proposed budget should have been made available online prior to the meeting. Chair Sylvester responded that a majority of councilors decided that it would be best to have the discussion in public at this meeting, rather than beforehand.

Vice Chair Miner provided a summary of the items in the proposed budget on the white sheet. Councilors had an opportunity to ask questions before discussing the merits of each item. Chair Sylvester asked for clarification from Vice Chair Miner about how two budget items (ferry ticket support for college students and Peaks Island Academy students) ended up in the budget proposal despite not being mentioned at public meetings. Vice Chair Miner said she had added them. Councilor Thundershield raised the issue of why the total amount being asked for is $40,000. Chair Sylvester stated that the City has major budget constraints this year and since $40,000 is what has been allocated in the past, it is unlikely they would increase the amount.

Councilor Phyfe passed around to councilors copies of the Island Transportation System (ITS) written proposal to the council. Councilor Eaton expressed concern about the $20,000 ask from ITS. Councilor Phyfe clarified that the ITS proposal does not ask for operating support, but rather asks for one-time support for the purchasing of a fuel-efficient, environmentally-friendly hybrid vehicle. She also provided some history about City support for ITS: the city started ITS 5 years ago with $16,000 to support a taxi service, and has supported ITS each year since then. Phyfe noted that ITS has raised $5,500 in private funding for the vehicle, for which the total estimated cost is approximately $40,000. She also added that Joe Gray, former Portland City Manager. has volunteered to work with ITS on 3 areas of potential: 1) city maintenance of the vehicle, 2) participation in the regional transportation system 3) development of a Peaks Island transit district (Chebeague is doing this, though it may not be possible for Peaks because it is not an independent town).

<u>2. Detailed Review of Proposed Budget</u>
Chair Sylvester led a process in which the council reviewed each line item in the proposed budget in order assess agreement on the item being included, as well as agreement about the dollar amount for each item. A straw poll was taken for each item during this process. A formal motion and vote was taken for the entire proposed budget later in the meeting.

A) Student Ferry Passes:
i) For public middle and high school students: extend passes to full year (i.e. cover the cost of having a pass during the summer months for public school students. Straw poll result: all in favor, all approve $84 per student for 60 students.
ii) For public elementary school kids 9 years old and older who go to public school on island, have no school-based ferry pass, and fall under adult ferry rates: originally proposed as $400/year ($100/quarter) for an estimated 15 students. Councilor Kelleher commented that it is not necessarily fair for affluent families to get same benefit as struggling families and asked if it would be possible to call on island families not to claim this benefit if in good faith feel they don't
need it. Councilor Mitchell suggested that some of the funds be moved to the need-based ferry ticket line item instead. Straw poll result: all in favor of $200/year for an estimated 15 students, with rest of funds going to need-based instead.
iii) For Peaks Island Academy students: $1,500/year towards ferry transportation for these Peaks-based private school students to be able to travel to mainland for educational and other activities. Straw poll result: all in favor of $1,500/year. [Note: Chair Sylvester suggested moving the funds for the Peaks Island Academy to the needs-based line item, instead of under student ferry pass/ticket support, but other councilors disagreed and the line item was kept under student ferry passes.]
iv) For college students: Straw poll result: all opposed, item was removed.
v) For private school students: Vice Chair Miner noted that when parents remove their children from the public school system that public schools lose the funding associated with those children. Councilor Eaton expressed that some parents remove children from public school due to schools inability to serve their special needs. Councilor Phyfe responded that public schools are legally responsible for meeting the needs of all students, including those with special needs. Chair Sylvester suggested that parents whose children go to private school due to

public school's inability to meet their child's needs could seek ferry ticket support from the need-based program. Straw poll result: all opposed, item was removed.

B) Monthly pass discounts:
At the request of Councilor Eaton, a straw poll was taken on whether to include a line item for monthly pass discounts in the budget proposal. Straw poll result: failed 5-2, with only Councilor Eaton and Chair Sylvester in support and all other councilors opposed, item will not be included.

C) Operating funds:
Funds to pay secretary to take minutes, cover cost of printing and posting notices and island brochure, copying and postage for mailings, etc. Amount for each item to be determined. Straw poll result: all in favor, all approve $2,500 total.

D) Island Transportation System.
Support for ITS. Straw poll result: all in favor, all approve $20,000. Councilor Thundershield commented that it is a smart investment for the council to support ITS' ability to purchase a reliable vehicle.

E) Bike pass.
Councilor Mitchell suggested having the pass be a voucher instead. Straw poll result: passed 5-1-1 (Councilor Thundershield opposed, Chair Sylvester abstained), $300 approved.

F) Need-based ferry support.
Vouchers for various types of ferry ticket support to be distributed by local clergy and by health center and food pantry. Straw poll result: all in favor, all approve $7,660.

<u>3. Public Comment</u>
There were 5 minutes allowed for public comment.

A member of the public expressed disagreement with two of the council's decisions: removal of the line item for ferry support for college students and inclusion of the line item of ferry support for middle school students.

Another member of the public asked the council to consider asking the city for more. He expressed that $40,000 was very little compared to the amount of money brought to the city by Peaks as a tourist attraction. He also asked the council to consider the lack of a second police officer on the island, lack of hydrants with water, and lack of city support for on-island transportation. Chair Sylvester responded that at the next council meeting (March 27) the topic of which items the council should advocate for in the overall whole city budget will be discussed. Councilor Kelleher added that Portland City Councilors need to hear directly from as many islanders as possible, adding that they will respond more to constituents than Peaks Island Council members.

4. Approval of Budget Proposal
The following final version of the budget proposal was voted on as:

-Summer ferry passes for public middle & high school summer: 60 students x $84 = $5,040
-Ferry ticket voucher for parents of public elementary school students age 9-11: 15 students x $200/yr = $3,000
-Ferry ticket vouchers for Peaks Island Academy students: $1,500
-Bike pass voucher system: $300
-Need-based ferry ticket vouchers: $7,660
-ITS: $20,000
-Operating: $2,500

Total: $40,000

Councilor Thundershield moved that the council vote to approve the above proposed budget. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

5. Potential Elimination of Fire Dept Presence on Peaks
Councilor Mitchell moved that the council consider the issue of whether the City is going to change the public safety staffing from the current one police officer and one firefighter to two police officers and no firefighter. Councilor Phyfe suggested that Chair Sylvester find out in the coming week (March 4-8) what the city's timing is on this decision, so that council can call a special meeting if needed. There is an investigation into issues surrounding the fire boat. Chair Sylvester will talk to the City Councilor who is leading the investigation.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm.