

CITY OF SAINT MARYS COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING

NOVEMBER 15, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

The regular monthly Council meeting of the City of Saint Marys was called to order by Mayor Christopher Pletcher on Monday, November 15, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. Notice of this meeting was sent to Council on November 12, 2021, posted at City Hall and published in the Daily Press.

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

ROLL CALL

Mayor Christopher Pletcher, Andrew Mohny, Margie Brown, Gina Vrobel, Shane Schneider, Solicitor Tom Wagner, Manager Joseph Fleming, and Recording Secretary Lorrie Levenduski.

Deputy Mayor Bob Roberts was excused.

City Staff: Tina Gradizzi, Community Development Director, Carol Muhitch, Finance Director, Kristi Wendel, Deputy Finance Director, and Travis Skryzpek, Deputy Public Works Director.

VISITORS

Sally Geyer, Stephen Bagley, Ned Jacob, Jerry Sorg, Amy Cherry, Joyce Bauer, Aaron Bauer, Joe Goetz and Richard Sadley.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES
October 18, 2021 – Regular meeting
Motion Passed

Margie Brown made a motion to approve the October 18, 2021 minutes, seconded by Shane Schneider and all were in favor.

November 4th, November 8th,
and November 9th, 2021 –
Budget Workshop Minutes

Andrew Mohny made a motion to approve the budget workshop minutes as listed, seconded by Gina Vrobel and all were in favor.

CITIZEN COMMENTS ON
AGENDA TOPICS

There were no citizen comments on agenda topics.

MANAGERS REPORT

Manager Fleming provided the following report:

- “I want to start off by thanking everyone involved with the Haunted Forest at Benzinger Park prior to Halloween, it was a huge success with over 1,100 people attending the event. I myself took my daughter and we both enjoyed it.
- Benzinger Park Vine Road side parking lot is being graded and expanded, currently the parking lot is open but be aware of the National Fuel Marker which we are waiting for it to be moved.
- The Ice Rink is in place for the winter season and when weather permits, it will become open. So, in turn, the parking lot behind the building will be closed to all traffic. Please stay tuned for future announcements on the opening.
- City of Saint Marys has gone mobile, we now have our own app called My St. Marys, which is available through both the android and apple phone systems.
- Also, the City’s website is being upgraded and will be launched very soon.
- I will be changing a policy for submission of complaints for Code Enforcement. Since we are in the process of upgrading our systems through the civic app and website, I am placing a policy for written submissions of complaints for better tracking and follow up of all complaints. Residents are urged to complete a form

NOVEMBER 15, 2021

either by paper, website, or through the City's civic app. I don't want to see verbal submission fall through the cracks and the complaint left open for any periods of time.

- Already, there were acts of vandalism at the new Fitness Court at the Downtown Event Park. We are asking residents if they have any information to please forward it to the police.
- I want to thank the St. Marys Legion Burial Details for their ceremony on Veteran's Day to honor all of our veterans.
- Street Department is transitioning to the Winter season which they already had to make a salt run in affected areas this morning. Still doing leaf collection so if any residents still have some leaves to call the City Garage to have them pick up. They have also started decorating for the Christmas Season today.
- As we all know, we just had our municipal election earlier this month and the City will have a new Council starting next year. The re-organization meeting will be held on Monday, January 3rd 2022. I am looking forward to working with the new Council.
- We had our Budget Workshops on the 4th, 8th and 9th of this month. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their participation for all the discussions held. I enjoyed the feedback and input in moving the process of the budget forward. A lot of hard decisions were made but they are for the betterment of our community. I also want to thank the City staff for all their hard work spending hours upon hours towards the Budget, but not to forget all the committees, boards, and authorities for their efforts and input.
- Lastly, I want to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and good luck to all the hunters during rifle season. A Reminder, City Hall Offices will be closed Nov 25th and 26th in observance of the holiday."

TREASURER'S REPORT

Manager Fleming provided the following October, 2021 Treasurer's Report:

The General Fund has collected 85% of its budgeted revenue and spent 79% of the budgeted amount. Last year at this time revenue collected was at 76% and expenditures were at 73% of budget and in 2019 budgeted revenue collected was 79% and expenses were at 74% of budget. Benchmark figures would be at 83%. Market value in pension funds increased this month and have increased from last year to date figures. Earned Income was at 58% of budget; for 2020 it was 52% of budget and 55% of budget for 2019, and for 2018 it was at 58% of budget.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION:

Consider for publication:

An Ordinance amending Chapter 18 Part 3 by adding a definition and allowing for consumption-based charges for Residential Properties

An Ordinance amending Chapter 18 Part 3 by adding a definition and allowing for consumption-based charges for Residential Properties was presented for publication.

Manager Fleming explained the current ordinance only allows for a residential flat rate sewer billing. In order to change the sewer rate structure to allow for residential consumption and flat rate billing the ordinance requires this amendment. This change was due to the proposed sewer rate changes that were presented and discussed at the budget workshops.

CITY OF SAINT MARYS COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING

NOVEMBER 15, 2021

Comment

Mayor Pletcher provided the following comments:

“Workshop session, a compromise after months and years of planning, debate, and listening to the public. It’s a unified Council which presents the Enterprise Fund portion of the budget and these resolutions to you tonight. I especially want to thank the sewer rate committee for continuing to work toward a reasonable solution which incorporated nearly all of the thoughtful suggestions made over time by the City’s independent, professional advisers on this matter (HRG), the recommendations from City staff, and the other members of Council who are not on the committee. This revised arrangement will fulfill the original plan to provide rate reform to residential, commercial, and industrial users. It also provides rate relief to the average resident, preserves a basic flat rate structure which matches the cost structure of the facility and the infiltration and inflow excess, and yet imposes a surcharge on the heaviest users of the sewer system. This proposal also mirrors the water authority quarterly billing structure which helps to reduce the administrative burden of the billing process for the City. It also preserves the federal American Rescue Plan Act funding for future investment in infrastructure improvements. The budgeted proposal tonight buys the incoming Council some time to prudently assess a long-term solution. However, there is still much work to be done and hard decisions to make, as our wastewater treatment facility and system are severely aged—and we still need to use it each day. We have 71 miles of piping under this City; many miles are well beyond their expected useful life with some spans approaching 100 years of age. The City will need to borrow significant funds in the coming years to begin repairing and replacing these old lines, equipment, and facilities. I charge the incoming Council with keeping this topic a top priority to provide a secure future for the residents of this City.”

Motion Passed

Shane Schneider made a motion to approve the ordinance for publication, seconded by Margie and all were in favor.

An Ordinance providing for the levy and assessment of taxes for the fiscal year 2022

An Ordinance providing for the levy and assessment of taxes for the fiscal year 2022 was presented for publication.

Margie Brown stated she believed it was important during this time to have a tax increase that was more towards the Earned Income tax rather than the Real Estate tax, since those on a fixed income would not see that increase.

Andrew Mohny stated he realized Council cannot “kick this down the road” for 10 years by not increasing taxes. He hoped the community understood why this was necessary and the need for it at this time. A portion of this increase was for the parks, which is near and dear to him. Capital funds were necessary to keep up the parks.

Mayor Pletcher had the the following comments: “Yes, there is an increase proposed for both property tax (millage) and earned income tax (EIT). As a reminder, the property tax affects real estate owners and the EIT affects wage earners who live in Saint Marys. It’s worth noting that property taxes have not been increased in a decade. Half of the property tax increase will be invested directly into the City’s Parks & Recreation budget. Earned Income Taxes are partially split with the School District which has already been taxing its maximum allotment. This

NOVEMBER 15, 2021

combined increase in taxes is very modest. It brings the City in line with prior inflation and allows for planning for continuing to provide high-quality services to its residents. Keep in mind that the total tax increase for the average resident of the City will be \$165/year or a little over \$3/week. That is *total*, for both millage and EIT increases. Just \$3/week. These additional funds will be used for improving street crew capabilities, grant funding, connectivity with City departments and services, capital infrastructure projects, and the parks and recreation system. The City staff has compiled an excellent, more comprehensive overview of the details of this budget and I encourage the residents of the City to reference it for more information.”

Motion Passed

Andrew Mohny made a motion to publish the Ordinance providing for the levy and assessment of taxes for the fiscal year 2022, seconded by Shane Schneider and all were in favor.

A Resolution for the 2022 City Preliminary Budget for various funds

A Resolution for the 2022 City Preliminary Budget for various funds was presented for publication.

Manager Fleming explained the resolution lists the dollars amounts for each budget fund.

Mayor Pletcher had the following comments:

“The City Council and City Staff have been working hard in recent weeks on behalf of the residents of the City. The focus has been to craft a working budget for the coming year which provides room for continuation of essential services, enhancement of City government efficiencies, and projects for advancing the cause of the City as an even more desirable place to live and work. I’d like to thank the City staff for their excellent effort in preparing the budget proposals and explaining the nuances of the various financial funds which keep our City operating smoothly. We have a tremendous staff which routinely draws glowing compliments from any outside agency working with our team. On behalf of the City Council, thank you for your commitment to excellence and for your assistance in preparing this budget together. I would also like to thank my fellow members of City Council for their time and commitment to serving this City and its residents. There have been many late nights of meetings and phone calls in recent weeks, especially. I think we have a terrific Council and I’m proud of the work we’ve been able to accomplish these past years together. Thank you for the intentional time and attention you’ve each contributed to this budgeting process for the upcoming year.

Shane Schneider commented a lot of work went into figuring out the sewer rate structure and believed it was a fair rate structure, which would allow the necessary funding for the operational and capital budgets.

Motion Passed

Shane Schneider made motion to publish the Resolution for the 2022 City Preliminary Budget for various funds, seconded by Gina Vrobel and all were in favor.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

There were no topics for discussion.

**CITIZEN COMMENTS ON
NON-AGENDA TOPICS**

Sally Geyer confirmed the budget would be on display at the St. Marys and Elk County Law Library, and at City Hall and posted

**CITY OF SAINT MARYS COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING**

NOVEMBER 15, 2021

on the City's website.

Joyce Bauer again described a history of code violations.

After a brief discussion, Councilman Mohny volunteered to review the issue and requested a list of specific violations from Mrs. Bauer. He and Manager Fleming would then meet and review her concerns.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Shane Schneider wished the hunters good luck and thanked City staff for their efforts on the budget.

Gina Vrobel echoed Councilman Schneider's comments and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving. She also noted the beautiful Veterans Day ceremony held on the Diamond.

Margie Brown noted how nice the veteran's banners looked and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

Andrew Mohny announced that Light Up Night would be held on Saturday, November 27th, which is also Small Business Saturday.

Mayor Pletcher provided the following comments:

"To the residents of this fine City: You have a group of individuals on Council who truly care about the future of Saint Marys and who listen to your wants and needs from your local government. You have a talented and committed City staff who are eager to continue to work hard for you. And you have a unified Council and Staff who stand together in publishing this budget plan for 2022."

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Pletcher made the following announcements:

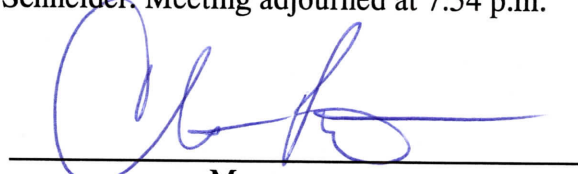
- Council's next regular meeting will be held on Monday, December 20, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Margie Brown made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Shane Schneider. Meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.



Recording Secretary



Mayor