

**GASTONIA CITY COUNCIL BUDGET WORK SESSION**  
**MARCH 29, 2022 – 6:00 P.M.**

**SPINDLE CONFERENCE ROOM, CITY HALL, GASTONIA, NC**

Mayor Reid called the Budget Work Session to order at 6:02 p.m. on Tuesday, March 29, 2022, in the Spindle Conference Room, City Hall, Gastonia, North Carolina. Mayor Reid welcomed everyone to the meeting. Councilman Jim Gallagher gave the Invocation. Mayor Reid led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance. Ms. Suzanne Gibbs, City Clerk, recorded the minutes.

PRESENT: Mayor Walker E. Reid, III  
 Mayor Pro Tem David R. Kirlin  
 Council Members: Robert Kellogg  
 James Gallagher  
 Charles Odom  
 Jennifer Stepp  
 Donyel Barber

City Manager Michael C. Peoples  
 City Attorney L. Ashley Smith  
 Deputy City Manager Todd Carpenter  
 Assistant City Manager Melody Braddy  
 Assistant City Manager Quentin T. McPhatter  
 Director of Financial Services Crystal Certain  
 Budget Administrator Crystal Falls  
 Budget Analyst Jessie Williams

ABSENT: None

Staff attending via Zoom were: Ms. Mary Elliott, Director of Marketing and Communications; Mr. Trent Conard, Assistant Chief of Police; Mr. Phil Welch, Fire Chief; Mr. Joe Albright, Director of Public Utilities; Mr. Dale Denton, Director of Public Works; Mr. Rusty Bost, Director of Development Services; Ms. Kristy Crisp, Director of Economic Development; Ms. Judy Smith, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Brandon Jackson, Chief Information Officer; Mr. Cam Carpenter, Director of Parks and Cultural Services; Mr. Jason Thompson, Planning Director; Ms. Cherie Jzar, Coordinator of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Dr. Ann Tippitt, Director of Schiele Museum.

**BUDGET WORK SESSION – MARCH 29, 2022****ITEM 5: REVIEW OF ADOPTED FY 2022 – 2023 BUDGET CALENDAR**

City Manager Michael C. Peoples reviewed the FY 2022-2023 Budget Calendar.

(Reference as contained in Exhibit Book 5 to Minute Book 111 at Page 42).

**ITEM 6: FEBRUARY 2022 MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT**

Director of Financial Services Crystal Certain gave a summary of the February 2022 Monthly Financial Report. She stated that overall everything is trending as expected. She stated that health insurance has seen some uptick this year.

Ms. Certain provided a monthly and annual view of each fund. She stated that General Fund revenues exceed expenditures by slightly over \$6M which is greatly due to the timing related to ad valorem tax collections. She stated that ad valorem taxes exceed prior year collections by slightly over \$900,000. She said that sales tax is also up \$974,000 over last year. Ms. Certain said that expenditures are relatively trending as expected.

As to the Electric Fund, she stated that the City is currently \$4.1M of expenditures over revenues. She said this is mainly due to the construction of the new Municipal Operations Center (MOC). She said that sales are slightly below the prior year. Ms. Certain stated that Equipment/Capital Outlay is down this year due to the purchase of two pickup trucks last year.

Ms. Certain gave an update on the Water & Sewer Fund. She stated that funds exceed expenditures \$1,883,572 and that sales are slightly below budget but are greater than last year. She said that fees are above budget due to higher late fees, tap fees, and sewer treatment surcharge fees.

Ms. Certain gave an update on the Stormwater Utility Fund. She said that Stormwater revenues exceed expenditures \$27,656. She said the revenues are trending on point but the biggest outlier for this fund is the Equipment/Capital Outlay. She said that 91.13% of the Equipment/Capital Outlay budget has been spent and that is because a street sweeper was bought.

As to the Solid Waste Fund, Ms. Certain stated that revenues exceed expenditures \$259,165. She said that fees have decreased \$119K which is due to bulky item pickup and excess yard waste. She said with respect to the Equipment/Capital Outlay, that 80.78% has been spent and that was mostly for Duke Street renovations.

Ms. Certain gave an update on the Transit System Fund. She said that revenues exceed expenditures \$121,287. She said there is an outstanding balance from drawdown reimbursements of \$146,336. Ms. Certain said that bus fares have not been charged this year so there are no fees and that all revenues are coming through other revenues such as the CARES Act.

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Ms. Certain gave an update on the Powell Bill Fund. She said that revenues exceed expenditures \$482,912. She said that the big expenditure for Contracted Services was due to one-time bridge inspections. She said as to Maintenance, the 83.55% is due to the timing of the resurfacing project.

As to Building Services Fund, Ms. Certain said that revenues exceed expenditures a little over \$1M. She said this is the second year for Building Services in their own fund. Ms. Certain said that three vehicles have been purchased from Equipment/Capital Outlay. She said this fund is currently \$485,502 above last year and the big uptick in January is because of two building permits issued, one for Center Cities and one for the Gateway 85 Project. In response to a question, Ms. Certain explained that Building Services is for building inspections.

Councilman Odom asked Ms. Certain if she could provide any update on the late fee change to show on the utility bills. She explained that the utility bills are pre-printed forms so it would be a little more time before that change is implemented on the bills.

(Reference as contained in Exhibit Book 5 to Minute Book 111 at Page 43).

**ITEM 7: UPDATE ON HUMAN RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT**

Deputy City Manager Todd Carpenter gave an update on Human Resources. He said this would be an update from the information he shared in January and that the information this evening contains firm numbers. Mr. Carpenter shared information about the compensation increase that was implemented in January 2022. He said that cost increase for salaries amounts to slightly more than \$5M; for benefits, the increase is slightly more than \$2.4M. He said the total increase is approximately \$7.5M. Mr. Carpenter stated that he felt the salary increases were much needed and much appreciated.

Mr. Carpenter presented information on retirement history. He said there has been an increase from the state this year in terms of a higher contribution that the city has to make towards retirement for employees. The total difference paid between last year and this year was \$1.7M. He said this is expected to increase for at least another year. Ms. Melody Braddy, Assistant City Manager, confirmed that statement. She spoke briefly about the expected increase. She said the increase would be less than in recent past. Ms. Braddy explained the City's retirement fund is very well funded but that the State Treasurer is wanting their fund to be closer to 100% funded.

Deputy City Manager Todd Carpenter shared information related to Health Insurance Claims. He said the last couple of years have been good years. He said he appreciates the fact that claims are now accurately being budgeted. Mr. Carpenter said there is currently a strong Fund Balance. He said that the City has some high-cost claimants that have affected the City this year in terms of insurance and that this creates a higher Stop Loss. Mr. Carpenter said there are a couple of high-cost claimants in excess of \$600,000. He said the Stop Loss for the City will be going up approximately \$70,000 because of this.

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Ms. Judy Smith, Director of Human Resources, stated that the Stop Loss for the City is \$210,000 per claim. Councilwoman Barber asked if the high claimants' costs include hospital stays, prescriptions, specialty visitations, and prescriptions. Mr. Carpenter explained that it was serious, long-term illnesses as well as the prescriptions.

There was some discussion concerning the difference in Fund Balance between the last few years. Councilman Gallagher shared his concern that from fiscal year 2021 to fiscal year 2022, there was a \$2.4M increase.

Deputy City Manager Carpenter said that the insurance program has somewhat been restructured with Blue Cross/Blue Shield based on recommendations from our broker. He said the City will start receiving pharmaceutical rebates and that the first rebate payment had just been received. He said these payments would be received quarterly. He said the projection was to receive one half million dollars in rebates.

Mayor Pro Tem Kirlin asked if there was information related to high-cost drugs being prescribed and consumed by employees. Deputy City Manager Carpenter said they have that information and that they are aware of which drugs are very expensive. Councilwoman Barber said this was a good reason to advocate exploring a community health partnership.

City Manager Michael Peoples spoke about the change in Fund Balance over the last several years. Deputy City Manager Todd Carpenter said that the Fund Balance numbers provide him a sense of wellbeing.

Ms. Judy Smith, Director of Human Resources, shared that the City has roughly 1,500 insured lives counting all dependents.

Deputy City Manager Carpenter said no other major changes were being proposed other than the rebate program. He said an increase in Stop Loss is expected in the amount of approximately \$70,000 and that Workers' Comp is out for bid and that information is expected back soon. He said that the HSA contribution of \$750 would be continued which will cost approximately \$750,000. Mr. Carpenter said the waist incentive program will continue next year. He said that payout was getting ready to take place for this year which will indicate how many people are able to receive the additional \$250 for the waist incentive this year. Mr. Carpenter said he thinks approximately half of the City's employees will receive that extra money.

Mr. Carpenter spoke about the two contracts the City has with CaroMont and Atrium. The cost for the CaroMont contract this year is \$136K. The contract cost for Atrium, which provides services to the Employee Health Clinic, is \$212K and another \$35K is budgeted for labs and supplies.

Mr. Carpenter said the Diabetes Management Program is planned to continue. He said he feels this program is paying off but that he would like to see more employees participating in the program. He said the participation numbers are increasing slightly every year. He said there are a lot of other employees who could participate and that a significant amount of outreach is

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conducted for this program. Mr. Carpenter explained that employees who participate in this program must meet with the coordinator working with this program. There was some additional discussion surrounding the Diabetes Management Program. Deputy City Manager Carpenter said that the diabetes claims are a very expensive portion of the City's health insurance claims. He said he does not know why more employees do not take advantage of the Diabetes Management Program. Mr. Carpenter said that a close watch would be kept on the program and if there is not more participation, then a decision to discontinue the program may be made.

City Manager Michael Peoples spoke about the PowerPoint slide containing the Vehicles and Equipment loan that Council had approved and the amount dedicated to each department. The total FY2022 loan was \$5,837,078. He said the vehicles and equipment are in the process of being ordered.

(Reference as contained in Exhibit Book 5 to Minute Book 111 at Page 44).

**ITEM 8: AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT FUNDS AND  
NC STATE BUDGET ALLOCATIONS**

City Manager Michael Peoples discussed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) monies. He said the City has \$15,661,923, half of which has been received with the other half coming in May. He said that \$10,000,000 designated as Revenue Replacement does not require as much red tape and bureaucracy behind it; that the monies still have to be reported but it doesn't have to qualify under certain specific conditions. After the \$10,000,000, that leaves the City with \$5,661,923 to be expended on qualified projects designed by the U.S. Treasury Department's final guidelines.

Mr. Peoples explained the projects already approved for use with the \$5,661,923 funds. These include Miscellaneous COVID-19 public health items, the ARPA Grants position to assist with processing and reporting, and miscellaneous upgrades for IT security. Those projects total roughly \$1.5M.

Mr. Peoples reported some strongly recommended projects for consideration for the remainder of the \$5,661,923. These include the Erwin Center pool and renovations to pool house (\$1.3M); replacing wooden playgrounds with modern playgrounds at all four community centers (\$500,000); partnering with Habitat for Humanity to extend water/sewer service on Weir's Lane to accomplish affordable housing (\$300,000); security cameras at Martha Rivers and Phillips Center (\$95,173); three-year advertising campaign for Communications & Marketing (mainly Marketing) (Mary Elliott, Director of Communications & Marketing spoke briefly about projects for these funds. She said the funds would be used to support more of the departments related to advertising efforts, particularly those related to CDBG and more advertising to attract more tourism; and working with the Honey Hunters baseball team to do some co-op advertising to help support attendance at games.) (\$75,000); wayfinding signage for miscellaneous greenways

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and Parks & Recreation (\$75,000); and golf course bridge renovations (\$70,000). These projects total \$2,415,173.

Mr. Peoples spoke about some additional items for consideration for the remainder of the \$5,661,923 after the “strongly recommended projects.” These include: Partnership with local non-profits for homelessness (combined with the \$2.8M in HOME and other CDBG funds) (\$1M); Conference Center lighting upgrade and other needed repairs (\$500,000); Potential partnership with local non-profit for workforce development (\$250,000). These additional items for consideration total \$1,750,000.

Mr. Peoples stated projects already approved by Council for funds from Revenue Replacement Designation (\$10,000,000) include the following: Tasers, body cameras, and storage of the information (approximately \$1.3M). He said he strongly recommends investing \$1.5M in FUSE contractual improvements (\$1.5M). Mr. Peoples said that other strongly recommended projects are three-year Powell Bill resurfacing project (\$1,5M); earmark of funds to match grants (PARTF, etc.) and direct funding for Linwood Springs Park Project (\$1M); repair of drive into skeet/trap range and PD/College ranges and improved parking areas on Bob and Pat Boyd Drive (partnership with Gaston College) (\$850,000); traffic preemption devices for Fire Department (partnership with NCDOT) (\$45,000). These projects total \$4,895,000.

Mr. Peoples shared additional items for consideration as projects for funds from Revenue Replacement Designation (\$10,000,000). These include Garage/Solid Waste/Car Wash facility upgrades (\$3M); partnership with Gaston County Schools for Athletic Facilities (\$750,000); and supplant City’s FY2023 General Fund budget (\$500,000). These projects total \$4,250,000.

There was some discussion about use of athletic facilities if the fields are re-turfed. Mr. Peoples said the agreements would resemble the current agreements with the County Schools; they have primary use and the City has secondary use; middle schools play earlier hours; high schools play in the evenings. Mr. Peoples said that currently there is only one turf football field in the entire county which is at Stuart Cramer High School. He said SIMS Legion Park can be used for football but there would be a lot of work in marking lines on the field. Mr. Peoples said there is the FUSE stadium but we don’t contractually have the authority to schedule events there.

Mr. Peoples said that the ARPA Funds have to be encumbered by 2024 and totally spent by 2026. He said the items are amendable.

There was some discussion about the cost for security cameras for Martha Rivers Park and Phillips Center. The cost of \$95,173 would include the cameras, the licensing that goes with the cameras, and the fiber optic connection to the City’s system.

There was some discussion about homelessness and workforce housing.

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There was some discussion on the Erwin Center pool renovation.

After discussion, Councilman Gallagher made a motion to move forward with the recommended projects using the \$5.6M. Mayor Pro Tem Kirlin seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously. Mr. Peoples said this will come before Council in a Budget Amendment at the Council meeting on April 5.

With respect to the ARPA Funds from Revenue Replacement Designation (\$10,000,000), Councilman Gallagher made a motion to pull the item for repair of the drive into the skeet/trap range, remove the \$850,000, and appropriate \$4,045,000. Mayor Pro Tem Kirlin seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

There was some discussion about the Erwin pool renovations and playground renovation that had been conducted around 1997. Mr. Cam Carpenter, Director of Parks and Recreation, attending the meeting via Zoom, spoke about this. There was some discussion concerning the Facilities/Management Committee report to be presented at the April 5 Council meeting. It was decided that the Chairman could mention that the item concerning the Erwin Pool renovation had already been approved at the work shop meeting.

City Manager Michael Peoples presented an update on the North Carolina Direct State Grants as contained in the exhibits. Items include Miscellaneous Water & Sewer projects including: smart water meters, wastewater outfalls, and upgrades to SCADA system (\$18,004,000); Catawba Creek Greenway (\$1,850,000); FUSE District property ((\$1,500,000); Funding directly appropriated to Schiele Museum non-profit board (\$1,000,000); Airport fence (\$250,000); Local government direct grant to replace main signs at all four (4) community centers (\$25,000). These items total \$22,629,000.

Mr. Peoples discussed the airport fencing and showed a PowerPoint slide that included a map with the three fencing options. He said the cheapest option is standard chain link fence. The other two options include additional length of fencing with black chain link or an additional length with decorative fencing. The decorative fencing is the most expensive. There was some discussion of using a combination of fencing types. Mr. Peoples said that staff would work on putting some ideas together to show how the fencing would look using a combination of the fencing types and would bring that back for Council to review.

There was brief discussion surrounding the Sims Legion Park parking lot and when the State would repave that. Mr. Peoples said that the City is still working with them on the mitigation project.

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City Manager Michael Peoples discussed the CDBC-CV Grant Funding and the Home-ARP Community Development Services Funding.

(Reference as contained in Exhibit Book 5 to Minute Book 111 at Page 45).

**ITEM 9: FY2022-2023 BUDGET OVERVIEW**

City Manager Peoples discussed the Budget Highlights. He spoke about the Building Improvements which include Schiele Museum 110-ton chiller replacement (\$125,000); Police Department Records Bureau carpet replacement (\$30,000); Tech Services network team office space (\$28,000); Police Department replace molded insulation and steam clean fan (\$25,000); Finance fix subflooring and walls in Accounting/Payroll (\$25,000); Tech Services split existing room into two offices (\$10,000) all totaling \$243,000.

Mr. Peoples discussed Administration - City Management, Human Resources, Finance and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion which includes: Insurance (\$714,000); City-wide DEI training and public outreach (\$45,000); Two Leadership Academies (\$25,000); Employee Development Program (\$25,000); and Employee Survey (\$7,500). He said it has been almost five years since an employee survey had been conducted.

Mr. Peoples discussed Planning and Housing & Neighborhood. Planning includes: Unified Development Ordinance & Comp Plan update (year 4) (\$125,000); Wayfinding Trailhead signage (\$35,000). Housing & Neighborhoods includes: ACE Program Grant (\$10,000).

City Manager Michael Peoples discussed Economic Development and Communications & Marketing. Economic Development includes: Gaston Investment Grant Payments (\$553,000); Economic Incentive Payments (\$115,000); and The Retail Coach contract (to be split with Electric and Water & Sewer) (\$35,000). Communications & Marketing includes: Advertising (ARPA funded, three-year campaign) (\$75,000).

Assistant City Manager Melody Braddy discussed Museum and Parks & Recreation. The Museum includes: Revenue sharing (TDB). She said the agreement with the Schiele Board is in the process of being finalized and will go to the full Museum Board sometime in April and after approval by the Museum Board, will come to Council. She said the current proposal is 50/50 revenue sharing. Parks & Recreation includes: Arts Initiative (\$100,000); Pool contract (Lineberger only) (\$95,000); Annual payment to Gaston College (1 of 8) (\$38,712); Four skeet machines (half to be reimbursed from Young Guns) (\$28,000); Batting cages (\$21,000); Striping and sealing Martha Rivers parking lot (\$10,000); New columbarium (\$8,500); and Laser grading infields at Martha Rivers (\$8,000).

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Councilwoman Jennifer Stepp said there is an upcoming Arts Committee meeting. She said she would like for Council to have some flexibility with the Arts Initiative funds. There was some discussion.

Deputy City Manager Todd Carpenter discussed Public Safety and Tech Services. Items all relate to radios and include: Radio consoles for Fire; TDMA upgrades for Public Safety 800 MHz radio system; and Non-public safety radio upgrade VHF to 800.

City Manager Michael Peoples discussed Public Works – Traffic, Streets and Fleet Services. This includes Powell Bill revenues being increased back to pre-COVID levels and a paving study.

Mr. Peoples discussed Public Works – Stormwater. This includes: Continuation of Trinity Hands litter contract (\$89,982); Storm-X trash trap (\$9,000); YSI water quality monitoring device (\$9,000) and Capital projects (\$1,000,000). He spoke about the monthly Stormwater Fee Comparisons and the Equivalent Residential Units (ERUs) being managed (residential and commercial). He said that there is an anticipated increase in inspections. He said staff is proposing to increase the ERUs from \$3.75 to \$5.00. This would amount to about a \$15 increase per year for an average homeowner.

City Manager Peoples discussed Solid Waste Services. He said there is a recommendation to increase the Solid Waste User Fee from \$8.50 to \$11.00 per month. This increase would help maintain the City's approved 50/50 strategy for the next two years and account for the following expenditures: landfill increases, CPI increases, nine additional employees, salary and benefit increases, Duke Street and Farmers Market Recycling Center contract operations, fuel, and additional equipment. The increase to \$11 per household would amount to \$780,000 additional revenue. Mr. Peoples said this increase would be for the primary cart only with no increase on any secondary carts. Ms. Mary Elliott, Marketing & Communications, said that her staff would plan for some proactive communication with the community about the fee increase. Mr. Peoples stated that the hope is to not have another fee increase for two years.

Mr. Peoples spoke about Public Utilities – Electric. He said there are many capital projects in Electric. These include: Southeast substation; New Development Infrastructure; Advanced metering infrastructure (AMI); and Citywide streetlight replacement to LED. He also mentioned the Rate Stabilization Fund. Mr. Peoples said that the proposed rate flattening is to reduce the number of rates. The non-residential rate structure would be reduced from 12 to 3 classes. The proposed new rate structure would have a 0% net effect on the electric revenues. Mr. Peoples spoke about the NCMPA 1 Rate Committee Recommendation. He said the Rate Committee voted to recommend a 13% wholesale reduction for member municipalities. He said the recommendation will likely be approved. Mr. Peoples explained that the proposed rate reduction shows a 2% rate increase in 2024, because of inflation, until 2032 when the debt service expires. Mr. Peoples said that the Rate Stabilization Fund needs to be packed so that the City will not have to pass on any wholesale increases and raise rates because of inflation until 2032. He

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shared information on the current Electric Fund which includes: Restricted Net Capital: Rate Stabilization: \$6.5M; Emergency Renewal & Replacement: \$7M and Unrestricted Net Capital: \$16M. Mr. Peoples stated that Electric is in great shape.

City Manager Peoples discussed Public Utilities – Water & Sewer. He said there are a lot of increases in water and sewer include material costs and supply chain. He said a 5% Water & Sewer Fee increase has already been discussed at the budget meeting in January.

Mr. Peoples discussed the Proposed Fee Schedule Amendments which include: Water & Sewer rate increase of 5%; Stormwater rate increase from \$3.25 to \$5.00 per month; Solid Waste residential rate increase from \$8.50 to \$11.00 per month. He said that Development Services is looking at various land development and plan review changes and that Building Inspections changes are to be determined based on the potential to work with the County.

Assistant City Manager Melody Braddy spoke about the proposed Fee Schedule amendments for Skeet and Trap Range, Special Events, and Rotary Pavilion. Mr. Cam Carpenter said there is a proposed increase in the Pavilion rentals rates, the vendor food truck fee is proposed to increase from \$30 to \$35, the vendor fee is proposed to increase from \$20 to \$25, and that a new fee has been added for a filming application because there have been so many requests to film on City property. He said that includes a \$75 permit fee plus \$50 per day for filming on City property. Mr. Peoples mentioned the Farmers Market rentals and Transit ads.

Mr. Peoples said that information provided to Council includes a summary of the proposed fee increases for the Planning Department. Mayor Reid said that the material could be read and questions asked later if needed. Mr. Peoples said the entire Fee Schedule as proposed is included in information provided to Council and contained in the Exhibits.

Ms. Crystal Certain, Director of Financial Services spoke about the current credit card fees specifically in relationship with utilities. She explained that the City currently absorbs fees associated with credit cards when utilities are paid with a card. She said that cost is \$1.50 per transaction up to \$400. She said that she had spoken with Paymentus about the options of passing along those fees to customers. One option is a hybrid model where the City would pay \$1.00 and the customer would pay \$1.95 if paying a utility bill online. Or, she said, the customer could pay the entire amount (\$2.95) and the City would not absorb the fee. Ms. Certain explained that the City started contracting with Paymentus in 2010 and the first payment kiosk started in 2011 for cash collections. Ms. Certain said she was seeking direction from Council on whether there is interest in moving forward with the hybrid model, which is her proposal. She said reducing the credit card fee by 50 cents would save the City approximately \$100,000 per year. Ms. Certain mentioned the multiple options customers have to pay utility bills with no fees associated. These include the kiosk, drop box, and drafts. She also mentioned PayPal, Venmo, Walmart Pay, and Amazon Pay. Ms. Certain said that comparing surrounding cities, the City is in the minority by not charging a fee for payment of utility bills using credit cards. Discussion

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ensued. It was the consensus to phase in the fee by charging \$1.00 to customers who pay their utility bills by credit card.

(Reference as contained in Exhibit Book 5 to Minute Book 111 at Page 46).

**ITEM 11: QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION/DIRECTION**

City Manager Michael Peoples said that the Budget is close to being balanced. He said that in December, there were discussions about the compensation and benefits increases and that Fund Balance would need to be appropriated to cover that expense. Mr. Peoples said that because of the uniqueness of this Budget with ARPA Funds and State Funds and other things along with inflation, that the possibility of a tax rate had been discussed. He said there is a way to avoid that. He said the way to avoid a tax rate increase is to appropriate Fund Balance this coming fiscal year and move forward with the proposed fee increases. He said Council would need to prepare for what will happen in 2024, which will be re-valuation. Mr. Peoples said that looking into the future, the tax rate will need to be kept the same in 2024. Mr. Peoples said by appropriating \$2M to \$2.5M from Fund Balance will keep from a tax increase. Mayor Reid said he does not want to do both raising fees and increasing the tax rate. There was some discussion. The consensus was not to implement a tax increase.

Councilman Odom asked about dates set aside for the City's use of the FUSE facility. He wanted to know if anything had been designated for the date of September 24. He said he was checking for an event for "Convoy for Hope." Mr. Cam Carpenter said that Perfect Game already has FUSE and SIMS Legion Park reserved.

Mayor Pro Tem Kirlin spoke about the need for a master calendar of events in Gaston County.

Mayor Reid reminded everyone of the joint meeting with the Gaston County Planning Commission tomorrow at 5:30 p.m. at the Conference Center. He thanked everyone for attending the meeting tonight.

Mayor Reid adjourned the meeting at 9:03 p.m.

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Mayor Walker E. Reid, III

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L. Ashley Smith, City Attorney

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Suzanne J. Gibbs, City Clerk

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