

03-15-2023 Town Council Meeting

Responses to Council Questions

ITEM #1: Discuss FY 2024 Budget and Five-Year Budget Planning

Council Question:

Transit: Could we get a breakdown of the budget between ongoing operating expenses and capital or other one-time (e.g., NS-BRT) expenses?

Staff Response:

A majority of the transit budget is related to operating expenses. For example, the adopted FY23 budget of \$31.45M includes the following items that are related to capital: \$1.5M for NSBRT (funded by Orange County Transit Plan), \$1.6M for GMV (new real-time system funded by grants) and \$1.7M for debt financing of buses (funded by Transit Partner contributions). The NSBRT and debt financing costs will continue in future budgets. The initial cost for the GMV implementation is a one-time cost.

Council Question:

Public Housing: Could we have used ARPA funds to meet any of the needs? Was it considered?

Staff Response:

Yes. Under the \$10 million ARPA Revenue Replacement threshold, anything that the Town is statutorily allowed to spend money on is an eligible cost under this category. That means that Housing would be an eligible use for ARPA funds.

Based on Council feedback during one of our ARPA presentations, we did consider Public Housing needs. We determined that capital grant funding available in the Town's Public Housing Capital Fund is sufficient to meet the capital needs that can be managed within our existing staff capacity. We continue to use federal and local sources of funds to address our maintenance and appliance upgrades. The greatest need in Public Housing at this time is qualified vendors willing and able to perform the necessary work.

Council Question:

I know that (over the last decade or so?) the Parks maintenance budget was cut significantly. Can we see a chart showing where we were at the former funding peak and what budgets for subsequent years have been? I know that Parks now is in charge of maintaining ROW in town in addition to parks maintenance; when was that role added to their budget? Were other significant maintenance obligations added during this time?

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Staff Response:

<i>Park Maintenance Division Budget (fiscal year recaps)</i>		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<i>Personnel</i>		1,490,822	1,463,995	1,530,088	1,550,438	1,672,783	1,831,175
<i>Operating</i>		653,309	672,599	819,355	698,277	735,858	623,926
Total		2,144,131	2,136,594	2,349,443	2,248,715	2,408,641	2,455,101

<i>Park Maintenance Division Budget (fiscal year recaps)</i>	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<i>Personnel</i>	1,883,849	1,799,300	1,823,500	1,928,494	2,077,986
<i>Operating</i>	619,062	695,952	683,462	682,434	685,412
Total	2,502,911	2,495,252	2,506,962	2,610,928	2,763,398

Park Maintenance was moved from the Public Works Department in 2008. At that time many more duties other than Parks and Recreation functions were moved with it to include:

- *Landscape maintenance at Town facilities*
- *Landscape maintenance at downtown parking lots*
- *Downtown leaf and litter removal along sidewalks*
- *Management of Town owned open space*
- *Right of Way (ROW) Vegetative management along Town roads*
- *Arboriculture program*
- *Cemetery administration*
- *Snow and ice removal along downtown sidewalks and select MLK sidewalks*

Since 2007, the number of staff members have gone from 25 to 19 in 2023. (Please note: one Park Superintendent and three Park Supervisors are not reflected in the staffing numbers.) Maintenance responsibilities at the Town Operations Center and Southern Community Park have been added during this time.

The Parks Maintenance operating budget in 2013 was \$653,309, while it peaked in 2015 at \$819,355, the current 2023 budget is \$685,412 which is an increase of only \$32,103 in 10 years. During this time, we have added many areas that are expected to be maintained at a much higher level such as the Legion Road Property, an extension to Bolin Creek Trail and additional natural surface trails. Additionally, the contract for the ROW mowing along Hwy 15-501, Hwy 54, Weaver Dairy Road and MLK Jr. Blvd went up \$25,452 between 2022 and 2023.

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Council Question:

On page 6, you show new staff position need at \$3.2 million (per year, I assume). Can we get a breakdown of where those needs are?

Staff Response:

The recruitment, retention, compensation capacity gap identified was based on the positions departments requested during the FY 2023 budget process. The 28 positions were requested from throughout the organization, including all our large operational departments as well as internal service departments. In addition, requests were made by various departments for on-call pay, shift differential, additional program support staff time, and a more robust pay structure for program support positions.

The five-year budget strategy identified \$7 million in personnel needs (\$4.125 million of which belongs to the General Fund). We decided to use the \$3.2 million because personnel needs shift over time and we thought that was most representative of the Town's current needs.

Council Question:

Could we get a list of the top projects and associated costs from the Stormwater Plan? We used to have the \$32 million for the 6 storage basins as the list as a place holder. Just wanting to check what the plan is for the increase in fees request in the worksession packet.

Staff Response:

At the May 5, 2021 Town Council Meeting, Council approved the Eastwood Lake Subwatershed Study that included a combined project prioritization list of identified projects from both the Eastwood Lake and Lower Booker Creek Subwatershed Studies which were approved by Town Council on January 18, 2017. Please see the attached list.

On September 22, 2021, Town Council voted to withdraw support on the Piney Mountain, Red Bud, Daley Road, New Parkside, MLK and Willow Projects to allow the Town to reevaluate project goals and explore alternatives that will preserve functioning natural hydrological systems and protect our mature forests and habitat. The Lower Booker Creek Working Group was formed to perform this evaluation and to provide recommendations to the Town Council for their consideration on how to move forward with these projects and studies. We understand that the Working Group will be providing their recommendations to Town Council in the next few months.

Limited funding is available to construct these prioritized projects. In 2015, General Obligation funds in the amount of \$5.9M were authorized, and \$2.7M were issued for the Booker Creek Basin Park and Storage Project. The last \$3.2M remain to be issued. Any additional funding needed will need to be identified, along with funding to comply with the NPDES MS4 Permit. A fee increase will be needed to complete mapping of the stormwater basins and major outfalls; inspection and maintenance of stormwater control measures; dry weather screenings; and

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additional staffing to comply with the NPDES MS4 Permit. The amount and timing of a stormwater fee increase will be better understood and discussed with Council during the FY25 Budget Process.

MERGED LISTS OF PRIORITY PROJECTS - LOWER BOOKER CREEK AND EASTWOOD LAKE

PRIORITIZATION	CATEGORY	IDENTIFIED IN SUBWATERSHED STUDY	COST*
Primary System Projects			
COMPLETED	Elliott Storage (Booker Creek Park)	Lower Booker Creek	\$2,900,000
1	Red Bud Storage	Lower Booker Creek	\$1,058,000
2	Lake Ellen	Lower Booker Creek	\$1,160,000
3	Piney Mtn Road Storage	Lower Booker Creek	\$2,206,000
4	Booker Creek Road U/S	Lower Booker Creek	\$1,488,000
5	Honeysuckle Road	Lower Booker Creek	\$408,000
6	Dobbins	Lower Booker Creek	\$232,000
7	Piney Mountain Road - Culvert	Eastwood	\$529,000
8	Willow	Lower Booker Creek	\$4,642,000
9	New Parkside Drive	Lower Booker Creek	\$3,225,000
10	Daley Storage	Lower Booker Creek	\$3,635,000
11	Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard	Lower Booker Creek	\$4,386,000
12	Foxcroft Drive	Lower Booker Creek	\$764,000
			\$23,733,000 **
Secondary System Projects			
1	Old Oxford Road/Booker Creek Road System	Lower Booker Creek	\$718,000
2	Markham Drive/Old Oxford Road Closed System	Lower Booker Creek	\$522,000
3	South Lakeshore Drive/Ridgecrest Drive System	Eastwood	\$145,000
4	South Lakeshore Drive/Rolling Road System	Eastwood	\$251,000
5	Chesley Lane Closed System	Lower Booker Creek	\$169,000
6	Booker Creek Road/Lakeshore Lane System	Lower Booker Creek	\$214,000
7	Arlington Street #1 System	Eastwood	\$121,000
8	Old Oxford Road	Lower Booker Creek	\$341,000
9	Wood Circle/Velma Road System	Lower Booker Creek	\$197,000
10	Woodshire Lane/Huntington Road	Eastwood	\$431,000
11	Ephesus Church Road	Lower Booker Creek	\$1,210,000
12	Shady Lawn Road System	Eastwood	\$177,000
13	Summerfield Crossing System	Lower Booker Creek	\$95,000
14	Arlington Street #2 System	Eastwood	\$154,000

* 2021 Dollars

** Total does not include the Elliott Rd Flood Storage Project cost