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UNOFFICIAL Minutes
MSAC Advisory Council 10/22/15 Budget Discussion meeting, prepared by Ron Merkin

This was a specially scheduled and themed meeting about budget issues not discussed during the regular 10/15 meeting because Janna was ill then and unable to attend. We were not a quorum.

Janna began the meeting by indicating that first quarter reports re: the budget will be sent soon, also that the final Jackman Fund check for $105,000 has been received. The total is now $455,000. She went on to highlight all the following: the senior center addendum to the larger city investment policy was passed last week by the Montpelier City Council. The City Investment Committee will soon submit an RFP (request for proposals) regarding investment management strategies / plans. Allocations (egs: low risk, mid risk investment plans) will be deliberated after these proposals are received. Last year $350,000 in our Jackman account earned only about $800 interest.

Approval has been granted to use $50,000 for short-term capital projects. This will bring the total possible short-term reserve to about $100,000, including approximately $50,000 already invested in a Morgan Stanley fund (what was referred to as the old "endowment fund.") Applications re: this capital project have been made to fund doors that would open automatically and a few other infrastructure improvements in the center. Application has also been made for more facility grants. The first floor capital project is tentatively expected to occur in Spring, 2016 (around the end of March). That time was chosen because it's financially feasible and the most convenient in terms of program (eg: class) schedules.

Janna explained some changes to the City Management Team and City Leadership Team functioning and work together (including all department heads and some seconds in command of big departments). This signifies a philosophical change and new approaches to management style, budgeting and decision-making overall for the city, with one aim being to engage and empower city employees at all levels and create changes in work culture. It also means that for the time being, city leaders have to attend more meetings, so Janna mentioned this would take more of her time. On the other hand, there will be more input from department heads re: city budget decisions and allocations. As one example, how much over the budget various departments are and how much to cut would be deliberated more collaboratively. Janna remarked that this system should afford good checks and balances. Its emphasis on employee consultation at all levels also seems like morale building, a motivating factor.

Janna proceeded to outline the current city budget schedule starting with City Council setting target tax policy directives on November 4th, our first department budget draft due to City Finance on November 12th, City Budget Congress November 30-December 2, Final presentation to City Council on December 9th, Public input Sessions in January, and the March 2016 Town Meeting Vote. Re: FY 2017, Janna indicated that MSAC can count on getting around $16,000 from a new revenue source, interest from the Jackman Fund, as a result of what was passed at City Council meeting on 10/14.

In response to a question I asked, Janna indicated that it's hard to predict what tax policy this City Council will set next month. To be on the safe side, MSAC always budgets less than what we ask for from our six supporting towns. Helping our finances is the fact that because we're a city department we don't pay for certain things like accounting, internet, etc. Also helping are grants from private organizations like the recent $1000 donated from the Hunger Mountain Coop to fund pilot van transportation to Tuesday lunches for seniors who can't get here on their own. Janna closed the meeting by requesting suggestions re: item #8 on the meeting agenda. Probably because people wanted time to think about this, not much discussion ensued among the comparatively few members present. So please send your suggestions to Janna!

8. Questions for Adv Council
    a. In light of your goals, what additional general or specific changes might you recommend in the budget?
    b. Do you support not doing the holiday bazaar once again in FY17 (as this year)
    c. FEAST numbers continue to go up. How do you feel about the possibility of allocating more money for JBI (we have level funded $18,000 for their expenses three years). Alternatively, we encourage them to continue pursuing other funding to sustain the FEAST program. (We have incurred new expenses)
    d. What different performance measures might you recommend to help us show how seniors are better off because of MSAC's work? (RBA background)
    e. Where do you recommend we consider cost-savings or revenue increases.
    f. Thoughts on class fees, dues, etc.?