



CITY OF LITHONIA
MINUTES– MILLAGE RATE PUBLIC HEARING
Thursday, June 15, 2023 @ 6 pm

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting began at 6:05 pm. Mayor Reynolds conducted roll call. Mayor Pro Tem Sheppard, Council members Inman, Howard and Honore were in attendance. Council member Wynn was absent during roll call.

II. Public Hearing

Motion – made by Council member Howard to open Public Hearing for Millage Rate. Council member Sheppard seconded.

Motion passed 3-0.

a. Report from City Administrator Donald Dejarnette

City Administrator Dejarnette explained that this year's county proposed rollback rate is 8.89 and the city is proposing to keep the same millage rate as last year at 11.021. This rate is a 23% increase over the County's proposed millage rate whereas last year it was 28% over the recommended rollback rate. He clarified that this would be a decision to keep the same mill rate the same as last year.

Mayor Reynolds asked Council if there was anyone that wanted to comment or provide some insight before she allowed the public to speak. Council member Howard stated she would like to hear what the public has to say.

b. Presentation by Persons Opposed to the change (10 minutes allotted)

Doreen Carter asked City Administrator Dejarnette to provide the property tax increase percentage numbers from the years 2021 -2023. Mr. Dejarnette stated that they are 16.67%, 25.94% and 24.87% respectively. Ms. Carter explained that cumulatively that was a 50% tax increase over the last 3 years. She asked what the vision is for the tax increases. Council member Honore provided some background information pertaining to the city's budget and mentioned some of the issues the city has encountered including Covid-19. He stated the city is attempting to catch up with other cities and move forward as a progressive city while maintaining Police, cars, and hiring personnel. He said that all these things are a factor in maintaining the current state of things.

Doreen Carter asked if the city received a TAN last year. Mayor Reynolds clarified that the city has not received a TAN since the last administration. Ms. Carter asked about several budget items and requested to know where those funds are going to be allocated. Mayor Reynold stated that the accountant could provide those numbers and that she hopes to see Ms. Carter at the budget meeting on Tuesday.

Council member Inman asked Ms. Carter if she could tell the Council about other funding opportunities that are available as she mentioned them tonight and at the previous public hearing. She stated that the Council did not want to go back to the days of borrowing money just to pay the bills. Council member Inman explained that she is also a homeowner and understands but stated this money has been used to provide additional services and has been spent correctly. She asked Ms. Carter if there was some way that she and Council could collaborate throughout the year, not just during millage rate discussions. Ms. Carter stated that she didn't think that was a question for her but a question for City Council and Administrator about identifying additional revenue.

Doreen Carter asked if Council members were attending training and are members of GMA. Mayor Reynold clarified that the city is a member of GMA and that everyone attends training. She stated that everyone will be attending GMA training in June and went on to state that there is frustration with citizens requesting more services and more personnel but when it comes time to invest back into the city, citizens seem to say, "Don't do that". She stated she's proud of the city's progress and refuses to allow things to go back to the way they used to be. Mayor Reynolds asked that citizens not wait until this time to be heard but that they be present year-round and work with the city on making progress.

Doreen Carter stated that she found out about the budget meeting by attending the meeting earlier and requested that council members share these meetings on social media to encourage citizen attendance. Mayor Reynolds and Mayor Pro Tem Sheppard clarified that the council has made posts on several platforms to engage the community and promote citizen engagement, but nothing has worked. They both explained that the city will continue to work to encourage more involvement of the citizens.

Council member Howard expressed her understanding of frustrations with taxes as a homeowner as well.

Motion – made by Council member Howard to close the Public Hearing. Mayor Pro Tem Sheppard seconded.

Motion passed 4-0.

III. Adjournment

Motion – made by Mayor Pro Tem Sheppard to adjourn. Council member Howard seconded.

Motion passed 4-0.

The meeting ended at 6:35 pm.



Shemeka Reynolds, Mayor

Attest:



Ashley Waters, City Clerk