

City of Rio Communities Budget Hearing Minutes
April 17, 2017

- Mayor Gwinn called the Budget Hearing to order at 6:00 pm.
- Present: Mayor Gwinn, Councilors Bill Brown, Peggy Gutjahr and Thomas Scroggins
- Absent: Councilor Arturo Sais
- Also Present: City Manager Bob Skerry, Treasurer Celina Benavidez and Deputy Clerk Pam Johnson
- There were 24 people in the audience tonight.

- Mayor Gwinn welcomed residents and thanked them for being at the hearing tonight.
- Manager Bob Skerry presented the 2018 Budget Strategy and the draft 2018 Budget Proposal. Those documents were made available to the public for review.
 - ✓ Jody Skelton asked what the total amount that has been allocated during this fiscal year for public safety.
 - ✓ Manager Skerry referred to the Budget proposal, listed items that have to do with public safety and explained why.
 - ✓ Kuan Tikkun asked what the financial benefit of having an industrial park is to Rio Communities.
 - ✓ Manager Skerry said \$132,000 in property tax not counting any GRT's we may get.
 - ✓ Helga Woerner asked about a time frame for the annexation.
 - ✓ Manager Skerry said it is immediate and a matter of getting all our ducks in a row.
 - ✓ Helga Woerner asked about the time frame for the heliport.
 - ✓ Manager Skerry explained that a helipad sounds expensive but it's just a concrete pad. He said helicopters could land in the parking lot if we put up a windsock, draw an X on the pavement and have recessed lighting to show the way at night.
 - ✓ Mike Woerner asked what GRT stands for.
 - ✓ Manager Skerry said it is Gross Receipts Tax and is not sales tax. He explained that it is a tax on the revenue created by a business and is business location driven which is big thing for Rio Communities.
 - ✓ Clark Metcalfe asked how much money is left in the Small Cities Fund.
 - ✓ Manager Skerry said it's not a finite fund that has been depleted because that fund was there but we got franchise fees, EMS GRTs and other funding that has helped replenish the fund. He said it is not a case of what has been used and what is left.
 - ✓ Jody Skelton asked about the \$20,250 shown for motor vehicle registrations.
 - ✓ Manager Skerry explained that we get a small percentage of the fee paid when you go online and register a vehicle.

- Mayor Gwinn opened the hearing up to the public for discussion.
 - Frank Stasi said everything is detailed but we have one officer working one shift to do all the things Manager Skerry talked about. He said the citizens are doing their part to help the community with block patrols but this community has grown in every way except having protection for people. He said we need another officer now and shouldn't have to wait a year, but if we can't there are other forms of security that this governing body should help us with. He said if we have citizens calling and on Facebook saying what's going on like he sees in Belen, those officers are out there and they say on Facebook these guys are coming. He said they want to catch these guys. He said we have one officer that works one shift and asked how he can possibly come close if we have a problem here. He said other sheriff deputies come occasionally but during their travels and they are not here all the time. He said we definitely need another policeman or another shift or some type of security.
 - Frank Stasi also said he looked at wages overall proposing 20% in salaries not including benefits. He said he looked at what we did before and what is being proposed now and there is a 20% difference. He asked if we need this now, we've got to have our priorities now and we all agree that is public safety. He asked if we give everyone a raise – do they need a raise - maybe. Are they worth it - maybe. He said we're all underpaid

including social security but we should put priorities where citizens want them and they're all saying we need someone out there patrolling.

- Frank Stasi said having a code enforcer was good because he was patrolling and often mistaken for a policeman and now we don't have one and why not. He said he doesn't know what the problem is there – whether it's money or finding the right person, but he would think the governing body should have picked up something after four code enforcers and figured out how we can improve it. Anyone can make an excuse but do we know the real reason, probably not and it should be looked into more. He said the code enforcer is a very important part and to attract people here we need to have the city clean. If you want business here - what do you think they ask me – how much police protection do you have. You're not going to get all this stuff going and you're not going to bring all these people in until you clean up the city and have police protection.
- George Koch said a commendable job was done in sharing the upcoming budget for 2017-2018. He said he assumes column #1 is where we have an approved amount - that was our budget for 2016-17 and then the annualized or actual was actually money spent. He said he has a question on safety. He said he spends a lot of time in his office on Saturdays and the boulevard is a speedway. He said it will be a matter of a few months before we have a major accident because of drag racing and trucks driving too fast. He said he would like to encourage Council to either put another police officer to work with traffic and it is not fair for people who live in the community and find it necessary to walk up and down Hwy 47 to be pestered by traffic that exceeds the limits by 20 to 30 mph or that use Rio Communities Blvd as a speedway. I spend enough time at my office and this is very common and I would like for it to be addressed in the budget for 2017.
- Helga Woerner said Bob Skerry talked about police cars and asked if we can use the one donated from Edgewood.
- Mayor Gwinn said they pick the car they want and what equipment is in the car and it has to meet criteria. He said even though those cars will run, the one they wanted to give us didn't meet the criteria our officers wanted.
- Helga Woerner said Frank Stasi has already covered what she wanted to say but she has been collecting signatures to get a traffic light on Golf Course and Horner and 47. She said everybody she talks to says we need police protection and that there is not enough here. She said she would bring it forward because she is coming here tonight.
- Helga Woerner she said another thing is that we don't have a zip code yet. She said when you go on the computer and order stuff and put down Rio Communities, the zip code comes back to Belen. She said even Comcast says sorry, we can't do it – when you have your own zip code let us know. She asked what the problem is and are we going to get one soon.
- Mayor Gwinn explained that getting a zip code is a long process. He said we have to deal with the post master general in Washington DC and they've already said they aren't going to give NM any more zip codes and they recognize Rio Communities as part of 87002. He explained that several municipalities in the state are served by multiple zip codes and we're sharing with one other community. He said it's up to the people to make the correction in their data and the way they look at it is that they are in violation because they're not supposed to be using the zip code as a search factor on what community that's in. He said he, Bob Skerry and Jim Winters have met with them and trying to do what we have to do to get that done. He said we've answered their questions but the bottom line is they're saying they're not wanting to give any more zip codes to New Mexico for whatever reason.
- Helga Woerner said she is aiming at 1,000 signatures for the traffic light and asked what she should do with her petition.
- Mayor Gwinn explained that is state project and has to go to their regulatory board. He said when we meet with DOT in Belen, we can bring up that this is a concern but they have to do the count to see if it warrants it.
- Helga Woerner asked if it would help if she gets the signatures so you'll have something to work with.

- Mayor Gwinn said yes we can share that we have a lot of people concerned but until they have their data, they won't budge.
- Councilor Gutjahr said DOT is the final one and we're meeting with DOT.
- Helga Woerner asked if she has to go to DOT?
- Mayor Gwinn said no - it's a DOT meeting and some mayors and councilors go.
- Manager Skerry said DOT does traffic counts and it either meets their requirements, or it doesn't.
- Helga Woerner said she is just collecting signatures and everybody says we need a traffic light and she almost got creamed over there twice.
- Mayor Gwinn said it took five years to get the light at 304 and 47. He said she can give us the information but it takes time. He said they confirm information themselves– they don't just take what we ask because it's a state fund. He said we have to pay for the lights and keeping them on and working but it comes out of their budget to put them in.
- Councilor Gutjahr said one thing just so everybody knows when you order on-line and put in the zip code on the order, you can type in Rio Communities. She said so far everyone she has changed stays that way and when she goes in and click 87002 it comes up Belen–Rio Communities and you can click Rio Communities. She said it's a pain but if you do it little by little it will change to Rio Communities.
- Jody Skelton said she is concerned about public safety. She said she is doing Community Watch in this area and we have gotten a lot of participation since February when we started. She said they have over 20 block captains, and that's growing every day. She said we do need another police officer and she doesn't think it would double the budget at all. She said we need stop lights and street lights – some of the streets are way too dark – you can look down the streets and can't see your hand in front of your face. She said it's imperative that we get this going and if we want community to grow, the empty houses to be filled with people that are coming in for the new factories we've got to do this. She said public safety is one of their main concerns.
- Jody Skelton said another question is about \$40,000 for the health clinic study. She said she doesn't understand what that's for – we've already voted for a hospital even though we can't seem to get it built.
- Mayor Gwinn explained that we've had some people thinking about coming to our community. He said that goes back to what the manager said about planning and trying to find who is actually out there and interested in coming to a community like ours and setting up an 8-5 clinic or something like that so that professional service would be here.
- Jody Skelton asked if that is totally separate from the hospital.
- Mayor Gwinn said that it is totally separate.
- Jody Skelton said she would definitely go to that hospital because we need one and we need it right away.
- Councilor Gutjahr said there is a lot of data put out and we know what is happening between the entities now. She said the purpose of the study is that there are people in the state who have been able to find a way to bring a clinic to their community based on the data being gathered in the state, putting it all together and finding providers – the key is providers. She said there are people who do that but we have to contract with them and that's the purpose of the money.
- Jo Stasi asked if we are still outsourcing payroll because it seems like with the additional people we can we do it in-house easily with Quick Books. She said she knows it's not a big amount of money but it would be a savings of \$1,500. She also asked what is included in dues and subscriptions.
- Manager Skerry said the major portion of dues and subscriptions includes the NM Municipal League and MRCOG.
- Jo Stasi said looking at the mill levy converted to taxes we almost have enough if it was dedicated to law enforcement, to have that second officer and that is so important. She said the people here need that second officer and we need to be adding an officer each year because people need the protection. She said what will happen when someone is robbed and gets hurt. She said we need that extra protection.
- Deforest Colegrove said zip codes are 9 digits and asked if we have tried the last four to make it specific to Rio Communities.

- Mayor Gwinn said we addressed that with the post master general and were told that's a routing code and Rio Communities has 5 or 6 of those four digit numbers.
- Manager Skerry said that number sorts mail to Rio Communities, but that is the route number so they know which truck gets that mail.
- DeForest Colegrove asked if that wouldn't that help if Rio Communities had one or two or three of those four digit numbers.
- Manager Skerry said we have them.
- DeForest Colegrove asked if they are used. He said he doesn't see the problem.
- Mayor Gwinn explained that they don't look at the last four digits – only the main five.
- DeForest Colegrove said he does a lot of business with Amazon and they look at the last four digits.
- Mayor Gwinn said a lot of people are doing that and when pop-ups come up they can determine whether or not it's Rio Communities.
- L.E. Rubin said a commendable job was done and a lot of hours put in to put the budget together. He said having done that for the fire department for many years he knows it takes a tremendous amount of work and then to get four councilors and a mayor to sit down in a room and agree on something it's five times harder than what we had to do with the fire department.
- L.E. Rubin said we've heard tonight and you've probably heard it in your other budget meetings -public safety, public safety, and public safety. The community wants another police officer and you say we're growing and having more funds coming in. That was the commitment that was made to this community when we voted to incorporate and that's the expectation we should get back. He said we need our mayor and the councilors to hear that message and that's what is important to this community. He said it has been drug out since incorporation and we keep being told it's a long process. We to need to get the process going and if we have to divert some of the funds you have in this budget to find a way to put another police officer on this year, that's our expectation that you work to get that done.
- Peggy Gutjahr said we appreciate everyone coming and there were a lot of good thoughts and concerns voiced tonight. She said she gives everybody her phone number - pretty much everyone in this room I have been able to give my phone number. She said if anyone is concerned that something is not happening and you don't want to talk to someone else, call me and I can try to explain and that can help me. She said calling is key for her because she won't know of concerns unless she reads it somewhere else. She also said she knows it's frustrating to be looking to see what is happening, especially about public safety, because she has a lot of people coming to her about that. She said she is grateful for the Neighborhood Watch and said it has made people aware of what there is around them but also what we can do as a community.
- Mayor Gwinn said he appreciates the feedback. He said this gives us direction but we have look at where reoccurring monies are coming from. He said he realizes how important public safety is and what we have to do to make things better. He said once we accomplished getting an officer, we have a better rapport with sheriff's department and we've seen more and more sheriff's deputies in our community. He said he knows it's not enough and we have to look at how we can build our police force and the right direction. He said if we add one officer here and there over time hopefully we can build it up like some of the other communities like Rio Rancho. He said over a ten or twelve year span they finally got up to 8 officers and they did the same thing we're doing – going to the county getting an officer to help and now they have their own police force. He said the cost is the same – the guideline is that the cost for an additional officer will be the same as for one officer because we have to pay for everything it takes to provide a police force. He said we have mill levy and we're also trying to provide other services but after hearing what people say here tonight, as a council we can work on it.
- Mayor Gwinn said someone brought up personnel. He said personnel is the key driver of this community. He said they deserves a raise and a lot of thank you's because a small group of people are doing an outstanding job to get the community to where it's at to this day. He said they go to schools to learn what they're jobs are. He said we don't have a New Mexico retirement package but we've developed our own

with a 401K for our employees and also give them a nominal fee to help with medical insurance they have to have.

- Mayor Gwinn said we've gone through code enforcers and you can read into it what you want but if you talk to Preston Craig, our last code enforcer, there are a lot of issues. He said when Preston came he was looking for something to fill his personal life to help get through the loss of his wife. He dealt with a lot of people and some were good and some were bad. He said when we hired Preston, he said he would be here about a year and he was here almost a year and a half before he finally retired and is now on his farm with ten cows and enjoying himself, doing what he wants to do. He said Preston got a lot done including a catalog in his computer of all residents in the community. He said that's the kind of person what we're trying to find now and we'll work hard to find someone.
- Mayor Gwinn said we'll take what you gave us back to workshop and see what we have to do.
- Jody Skelton asked if anyone has looked at other towns our size to see what they have for police department.
- Mayor Gwinn said there are towns our size that have been around several years and have grown their gross receipts. He said if you listen to Municipal League, GRT is what drives salaries for staff. He said we're using franchise fees, mill levy tax and everything we can get. He also said we've lost businesses and are trying to get them back.
- Mayor Gwinn said Edgewood is smaller but takes in \$400,000 in GRT and Ft Sumner is unique and also contract with the sheriff's department. He said they have one officer and also have protection from their county. He said they have the substation in the heart of Ft Sumner which puts them all in one area going to duty from there and that makes a big difference.
- Mayor Gwinn said we still have in Comprehensive Plan which includes establishing a substation for the sheriff but we'll probably have to wait until the next sheriff is elected but it's still in the Plan. Mayor Gwinn said he has talked to Elephant Butte which is one of the newer cities and their GRT is not that much but they are utilizing sheriff deputies from Sierra Co. He also mentioned Anthony which has a great base because a lot of it is drawn from the Texas side and they're taking in close to \$300,000. He said if we grow our economy, we'll have a chance to do what we want to do.
- Mayor Gwinn said he appreciates Neighborhood Watch but we have to find funds that will be recurring every year. He said we don't want to put someone there that we have to cut away because all of a sudden gross receipts tank. He said we have to look at all angles.
- George Koch said Magdalena has a population of 900 and they have a town marshal. He said their speed limit through town is 45 mph and he works during the day - and you better not be doing 50 mph or you're going to get a ticket. He said that's well known throughout Socorro and Catron counties and we need to get a police officer and have him work during the day and concentrate on traffic. He said the first area is safety. He said he has seen accidents and deaths on Rio Communities Blvd and council should be appalled at what's happened in the past. He said we've missed the boat with enforcement of speeders, 4 wheelers and he hasn't seen a motor cycle go down the street but what they go on one wheel instead of two. He said this just goes on and on and the idea is clear - we need your help
- L.E. Rubin said grants are available to get money for fire fighters and police officers and the grants cover 100% of the salary the first year and the second year it drops to 80% or 90% and it works out that the municipality would have to fund the cost but over 5-6 year period that the grant runs. He asked if there is reason we can't get the sheriff's department to put some more people on specifically for Rio Communities and fund it through something like the safer grants.
- Mayor Gwinn said those grants aren't available.
- Manager Skerry said those grants have dropped off to zero. He said the only federal grant left is the CDBG and it's on the chopping block now.
- Manager Skerry said he is from a small community in Colorado that hired three officers through a Homeland Security grant. He said at end of 3 years when it sunsetted, it was a tough deal because they were young

officers and the people the people didn't want to lay them off so we had to raise taxes. He said it was a matter of going to the taxpayers and asking if we lay these guys off or do you agree to pay more taxes.

- L.E. Rubin said there was a mill levy on the hospital that we kept as tax for this community and asked if that money is earmarked to go to special area.
- Mayor Gwinn said it goes to general fund and dispersed wherever support is needed.
- L.E. Rubin asked if there is money for police officer.
- Deforest Colegrove said a part of the presentation was time schedule and asked if we have any kind of a plan or time schedule to get this much needed additional officer.
- Manager Skerry said absolutely. He said it took Rio Rancho eight years to get to the point they had enough sustainable income to get a police department and they had Intel so they had a boost in GRT eight years. He said they contracted with Sandoval County and as soon as they approached eight officers they switched. He said according to the union it takes twenty officers so 16 at Bosque Farms and 16 x \$125,000 is what is budgeted. He said if you look at other towns and see what their law enforcement budget and divide it by \$125,000 that will be close to how many officers they have.
- Deforest Colegrove said then we're asking for one more at \$125,000 so that's per officer. He said if we want another officer is that another 125,000 or did I miss something.
- Manager Skerry said yes - every time.
- Deforest Colegrove said we're only asking for one and I'm asking if you have any kind of a plan to get to that point.
- Manager Skerry said if voters say they want to raise the mill levy. He said discussions with Council have been not to raise the mill levy or GRT. He said the city is at 7.4375 on GRT and 2.75 mill levy which can go up to 7.65.
- Jody Skelton said we already did our mill levy with the understanding that it was for police officers.
- Manager Skerry said you have a police officer and he thinks we're doing pretty good public safety-wise. He said we have a lot of free equipment that wasn't there for forty years.
- Jody Skelton said she would rather pay for another officer another one of those electric things that tells how fast she's going down the road.
- Margie – asked how many of you heard about the wife that stabbed the husband on Crenshaw off Carmel here in RC. It took 2 hours for officer to come. That tells we need protection. Yes we need signs yes we need potholes filled yes we need speed machines but priorities– we need to take care of our people. We need to take care of our community. People are going to start leaving and then where will we be.
- Mayor Gwinn said with the information we have now, we'll look to see what we can do with the budget. He said we can always do some things and need to look at priorities. He said we've asked the people what they are interested in and that's what we're trying to do. He said when they say public safety or roads and economics and there are thirteen things we're looking at and trying to get at least six or seven of those in this budget.
- Margie Saavedra said you can't spread yourself thin with \$10, but if you use that \$10 to go directly to public safety it's going to work and it'll be something that people can see that's going on and say Rio Communities has stepped up and brought in another officer.
- Frank Stasi said he had a lot of commercial buildings and one of the first things they ask is about police protection. He said the last person who wanted to put in a gym asked about police protection and he went to Bosque Farms. He said one business still open has been robbed three times and we can't attract business until we have police protection.
- Helga Woerner said we should consider holding off on raises until we get a police officer.

Adjourn

- The budget Hearing was adjourned at 7:25.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth (Lisa) Adair, Municipal Clerk
(Taken and prepared by Pam Johnson, Deputy Clerk)

Approved:

Mark Gwinn,
Mayor

Margaret (Peggy) Gutjahr,
Councilor Mayor Pro-tem

William (Bill) Brown,
Councilor

Arturo R. Sais,
Councilor

Thomas Scroggins,
Councilor

Date: _____