

City of Rome
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
March 15, 2023

PRESENT:

Committee Chairman Bill Collins
City Commissioner Craig McDaniel
City Commissioner Jamie Doss
City Manager Sammy Rich
Assistant City Manager Meredith Ulmer
Finance Director Toni Rhinehart
Assistant Finance Director Kraig Ingalsbe
Recording Secretary Vicki Blair

Guests: Denise Downer-McKinney, Chief of Police
Debbie Burnett, Assistant Chief of Police
Kelley Parker, Assistant to City Manager
Doug Walker, Public Relations

Committee Chairman Collins called the meeting to order and approved the minutes from the November 30th meeting by common consent.

Finance Director Toni Rhinehart opened the meeting with discussion of the February Financial Statements. The Title Tax Fee Revenues are a bright spot and came in at \$98,814, slightly higher than the \$93,951 received in 2022. Motor Vehicle Taxes continue to be flat but are slightly higher than 2022. Local Option Sales Tax is up from 2022 by about \$84,000. January collections are typically the lowest of the year, but this should increase throughout the year. The Georgia Power franchise fee for 2022 was \$2.8M which is \$300,000 over budget and over last year. Overall business licenses are slightly below last year but facility rentals are slightly above 2022. Police Fines are slightly up from 2022. Red Speed revenues are just under \$20,000 and are slightly below 2022 but continue to be consistent. Chairman Collins asked for clarification as to when the cameras are in operation and Assistant Chief of Police Burnett responded by saying when the lights are flashing, it is a reduced speed limit, and when the lights are off, the cameras are still in operation at the regular speed limit when school is in session. Ms. Rhinehart reminded everyone that this money is designated for Police and this revenue is tracked separately. The second camera began collecting fines in February. Chairman Collins also asked if the police officers that work at Rome schools are paid by the school system, and Ms. Rhinehart responded by saying that the City pays the officers and in turn the City bills the school system based off the number of days school is in session. Commissioner Doss asked if the split with the camera system is 50/50 and Ms. Rhinehart and Assistant Finance Director Kraig Ingalsbe both responded saying the split is approximately 60/40 but the actual is 2/3 to City Police and 1/3 to RedSpeed. LPR fees come out of the City Police portion. Ms. Rhinehart continued with her presentation stating interest on investments has increased for 2023 to \$66,436 compared to \$3,652 in 2022. The LGIP rate is approximately 4.5%. Total operating revenues are above 2022 by about \$422,819.

GENERAL FUND:

Most departments are below YTD budget in expenditures but above 2022 due to rising costs of operating expense. Public Safety expenses are above 2022 but significantly under budget, mostly due to police being understaffed by approximately 16 officers. Total Public Works is above 2022 but well under budget YTD. Ms. Rhinehart stated that every department has done a great job with their budgets this year – all being within budget YTD. Total operating expenses are up over last year by about \$646,270 but below budget YTD by \$668,347. She stated General Fund is in good shape for this time of the year.

WATER FUND:

Water usage is down but revenues are up mostly due to the increase in rates. Operating revenues are up to \$4.9M this year as opposed to \$4.4M last year. Leak Protection is slightly up from 2022. Bond coverage is very healthy right now due to very little outstanding debt at this time. The cash balance has gone from \$19.8M in 2022 to \$21.4 in 2023 resulting in an increase in cash of approximately \$1.6M.

BUILDING INSPECTION:

Construction appears to be down from last year as the permit revenues for 2023 total \$157,774 compared to \$327,292 in 2022. Both City and County permits are down from 2022. Expenses are above 2022 but below budget.

TRANSIT FUND:

We are still offering free ridership, so revenues are still low. We are still receiving funds from Paratransit but are waiting on funds from the State at this time. They are usually several months behind in sending those funds. Expenses are up from 2022 and slightly above budget. All of the Tripper buses have now been sold and those funds will have to be put into restricted cash for any buses that were not fully depreciated. Restricted cash balance is about \$344,000.

FIRE FUND:

Revenues are right in line with budget. Expenses are above last year but well under budget YTD.

HOTEL/MOTEL TAX FUND:

Revenues in 2023 are \$261,819 and are up from last year's amount of \$216,549.

INSURANCE:

We have seen a substantial increase in claims in the first few months of 2023. We may need to reevaluate employee premiums mid-year. We are watching this very closely and are hopeful this will not have to take place. We have not had an employee premium rate increase in four years. YTD revenues are slightly behind budget but claims and expenses are well above budget by \$342,000 at \$1.84M. Claims are above 2022 by \$420,000 just two months into the year.

PARKING FUND:

Parking Fund had revenues higher than normal for February, but expenses were above budget although slightly down from 2022.

FORUM PARKING:

Parking revenues are slightly up from 2022; however, expenses are up. This is due to the annual AIMS system hosting fee of approximately \$25,000. City Manager Rich began a discussion regarding possible increase to revenues with more events at the forum after the City takes ownership of the day to day operations and scheduling.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT:

Revenues of \$791,624 are up from 2022 but slightly behind YTD budget. Expenses are below YTD budget. There is a net gain of \$26,785 YTD.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Commissioner McDaniel began a lengthy discussion regarding the school bond vote. He recommended the full Board of Commission take another look at this vote and ask Bill Camp to make another presentation to the Board. It was reiterated that we are in full support of the Rome City Schools building a new Rome Middle School, but McDaniel believes there may have been some misrepresentation of the information provided. City Manager Rich stated that the vote that originally occurred was basically an indication to tell the school board to continue with their design concept, so they are working to develop construction documents to obtain additional pricing for the project to have a more accurate number. He stated that it is crucial the school board knows exactly where the Commission stands to prevent unnecessary wasted time and money. Commissioner McDaniel made a motion to authorize Rich to have this discussion with the school board and Commissioner Jamie Doss seconded the motion. Chairman Collins abstained from the vote. Discussion was then had regarding interest rates on bonds and commercial lending hesitancies. Chairman Collins recommended having a called Finance Committee meeting and invite the full Board, but it was then decided to have a called full Commission Board meeting involving the bond advisor. McDaniel reminded everyone that this re-visit is strictly being done to prevent undue burden to the taxpayer.

With no further discussion and no other items to review, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Vicki Blair