

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
August 9, 2021

The Independence City Council met for a Special Called Meeting, August 9, 2021, at 6:00 p.m., virtually held via Microsoft Teams and in person, in the Council Chambers, 111 E. Maple.

Mayor Eileen Weir, Presiding Officer of the City Council, called the meeting to order. Upon roll call, the following members of the City Council were present: Mike Huff, John Perkins, Brice Stewart, Mike Steinmeyer and Mayor Eileen Weir. The following members of the City Council attended virtually: Karen DeLuccie and Daniel Hobart. The following members of the City Council were absent: None.

CITIZENS REQUEST TO SPEAK:

Councilmembers DeLuccie and Perkins moved to suspend the Council Rules of Procedure to allow a non-resident to speak.

Upon roll call, the vote was: Ayes – Councilmembers: Huff, Perkins, Stewart, DeLuccie, Steinmeyer, Hobart and Mayor Weir.

Chris Fairbank spoke to Council regarding the IFD Sales Tax.

FIRST READINGS:

Bill No. 21-057, entitled

“AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CITY’S CURRENT USE TAX TO ALLOW FUNDING TO BE UTILIZED FOR ALL POLICE DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT; AND PROVIDING FOR SUBMISSION OF THE PROPOSAL TO THE QUALIFIED VOTERS OF THE CITY FOR THEIR APPROVAL AT THE SPECIAL ELECTION CALLED AND TO BE HELD IN THE CITY ON NOVEMBER 2ND, 2021, AND PROPOSING THE FORM OF THE BALLOTS TO BE EMPLOYED AT SAID ELECTION AND DIRECTING THE CITY CLERK TO DO ALL THINGS CALLED FOR BY LAW IN CONNECTION WITH THE HOLDING OF SAID ELECTION.” – *Requested by Councilmembers Dan Hobart and John Perkins* was given its first reading by title. Mayor Weir stated that paragraph 5 of the ordinance does not define what the needs are of the Animal Shelter and the Police Department.

Councilmembers Perkins and Hobart moved to amend Bill No. 21-057 to clarify that the Police portion will be capped at \$4,000,000 and to keep the same 2.5% CPI.

In response to Councilmember Perkins, City Manager, Zach Walker provided some background about this bill and what changes this will orchestrate. In response to Councilmember DeLuccie, Mr. Walker stated that staff would still be obligated to hire thirty officers. He stated that the change will allow us to utilize additional funds for wage increases and equipment. Councilmember DeLuccie stated that we should amend the ordinance to state the existing funding would not be replaced by this \$4,000,000. Mayor Weir stated that would require an additional motion after the first motion is addressed. In response to Councilmember Steinmeyer, Mr. Walker clarified that we currently have forty police officer vacancies and clarified that the goal was to increase the police force to be in line with our population needs. Police Chief Brad Halsey provided details about current vacancies. In response to Mayor Weir, Mr. Walker stated that Prop. P was not to staff vacant positions, but to add additional sworn positions to our police force. In response to Councilmember Steinmeyer, Mr. Walker confirmed that the approved budget included Prop. P positions for police staffing. In response to Councilmember Hobart, Mr. Walker provided more information about discussions with the FOP president. Mr. Walker stated that in a letter from the FOP president last week, their preference is to move forward with a Prop. P amendment that would redirect more resources toward increased wages. In response to Councilmember Hobart, Chief Halsey confirmed that the police department could respond to more calls in a timely manner if we had more resources and is in favor of this amendment. In response to Councilmember Hobart, Mr. Walker provided more information about how the amendment would change the waterfall amount. Mr. Walker explained that the original \$3,000,000 amount was to hire thirty new officers at the time and the additional funds would allow for salary and benefits to be increased to a higher rate and would help attract and retain officers. Councilmember Hobart stated that this

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amendment would allow us to help retain the officers we have, bring new officers to our city and to better serve the community. In response to Councilmember Steinmeyer, Mr. Walker stated that new officers hired within the last year have been hired using Prop. P funds. In response to Councilmember Huff, Mr. Walker stated that there is not a requirement to meet budgeted staffing prior to using Prop. P funds, but we are not able to reduce the number of officers and have to add a net 30 officers to staff. Councilmember Huff stated that we need to make sure we are very transparent with the public with what we are spending. In response to Councilmember Huff, Chief Halsey provided information about police officer training and readiness. Chief Halsey provided information regarding cadets and contracts with cadets. In response to Councilmember Huff, Mr. Walker stated that funds budgeted for officer positions that are not filled are used to help pay out overtime and to balance the General Fund in other places following accounting standards and getting a clean audit each year. Mayor Weir stated that the number of personnel fluctuates in every department. Mayor Weir stated that when Prop. P was approved for 30 more police officers; those funds were added to the budget. Mayor Weir stated that we are getting sidetracked by the number of officers, when the issue is what the level of funding needs to be to increase our police department and trigger the overflow to the General Fund and other tax funds. Mayor Weir stated to keep in mind that all the other Funds will collectively be reduced by \$1,000,000. In response to Councilmember DeLuccie, Mr. Walker stated that after discussions with the FOP, they feel this amount will help across the board raise the wage tables for the 160 represented by the FOP and would put us at or above the top in the metro area. Mr. Walker provided more details about how this will affect the General Fund and budget.

Upon roll call to amend Bill No. 21-057, the vote was: Ayes – Councilmembers: Huff, Perkins, Stewart, DeLuccie, Steinmeyer, Hobart and Mayor Weir. Noes – None. Absent – None. The Mayor declared the motion approved.

Mayor Weir stated that she feels like the ballot language is unclear regarding how the waterfall funds would come into place. Mayor Weir stated that it is important now that we have the local Use Tax in place and dedicated by vote of the people to certain purposes, that it is clear that moving forward those other taxing funds would continue to receive funding. The Mayor stated that she feels the current language appears to say the funding would be entirely for the Police Department. In response to Mayor Weir, Jeremy Cover, outside Counsel with Lauber Law Firm, provided more information about the ballot language. Mr. Cover stated that it is not a requirement to send the information to the Missouri Department of Revenue because the tax rate is not changing.

Councilmembers Perkins and Hobart moved to amend Bill No. 21-057 to remove Section 3. Upon roll call to amend Bill No. 21-057, the vote was: Ayes – Councilmembers: Huff, Perkins, Stewart, DeLuccie, Steinmeyer, Hobart and Mayor Weir. Noes – None. Absent – None. The Mayor declared the motion approved.

In response to Councilmember Stewart, Mr. Walker provided more information about why equipment is being included in this change. Mr. Walker stated the intent of this item is not for support staff, but only for sworn officer positions.

Councilmembers Stewart and Steinmeyer moved to update the ballot language to read, “Shall the local use tax currently imposed by the City of Independence, Missouri, which is dedicated to a no-kill animal shelter and funding additional police officers, be amended to allow for the funding of all sworn police personnel and equipment. Voting in favor of this question will not result in any tax increase. The current general fund percentage allocation for the police department and the no kill animal shelter shall remain in effect.”

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In response to Councilmember Hobart, Mr. Walker stated that his recommendation would be to leave the verbiage to say sworn police personnel and not change it to read police officer. Mayor Weir clarified that this is not a set dollar amount and is a percentage and can fluctuate depending on revenue. Upon roll call to amend Bill No. 21-057, the vote was: Ayes – Councilmembers: Huff, Perkins, Stewart, DeLuccie, Steinmeyer, Hobart and Mayor Weir. Noes – None. Absent – None. The Mayor declared the motion approved.

Councilmember Perkins stated that bringing ideas like this to a public meeting and having these discussions is the right way to do things. Councilmember Perkins stated that this was a recommendation from the Public Safety Tax Committee, and we needed to work out the language and details about how to move this forward. Councilmember Perkins stated that Public Safety is a very important topic and needs citizen input which is why we are putting it on the ballot for public consideration. Councilmember Perkins thanked others for their conversations tonight.

INFORMATION ONLY:

1. The City Council Study Session will be held after the adjournment of the Special Called Meeting.
2. Please Note: In accordance with RSMo 610.021, the City Council may convene in an Executive Session at 5:15 pm, in the Council Chambers and move to Conference Room D for the closed meeting, on matters of litigation, legal action, and/or attorney client communications, as permitted by Sec. 610.021(1), on matters of personnel, as permitted by Sec. 610.021(3) and personnel records, as permitted by 610.021(13), on matters of contracts, as permitted by 610.021(12), on matters of real estate, as permitted by 610.021(2) and/or matters of labor negotiations, as permitted by 610.021(9).

At 7:05 p.m., there being no further business, the Mayor declared the meeting adjourned to a Regular Meeting at 6:00 p.m., August 16, 2021, in the Council Chambers.

Presiding Officer of the City Council
of the City of Independence, Missouri

ATTEST:

City Clerk