The Lyerly Town Council met for a public budget hearing on Tuesday, February 6, 2018 at Lyerly Town Hall. Those in attendance were:

James Ferguson, Mayor

Gwen Fisher

Phil Brooks

Juanita Baker

Shirley Davis

FEBRUARY 6, 2018

Mayor Ferguson began the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Mayor Ferguson said that everyone should have meeting minutes to review and will be approved next week.

Juanita Baker asked if they had finished the paving job that was discussed at the last meeting. Mayor Ferguson said that it has not been completed yet but will be. Phil Brooks added that they did come back and touch up the driveways a little. Mayor Ferguson said that he did put some gravel on the driveways for a temporary fix. He will be back to fix them right.

Mayor Ferguson started to explain the budget. He said that some of the numbers are pretty specific. He just brought those over from last year. He added where he thought we may be spending money this year. Shirley Davis asked what the Insurance premium tax is. Mayor said that anyone who sells insurance to anyone in the town limits has to pay us a license fee. Shirley Davis then said that she didn’t know if it was the time to bring it up or not but she thinks that this year, we should vote in to have people outside of the city to pay a little more on fire dues to help cover the expenses. She said that she believes that it should go up to about $10. Gwen Fisher asked how many people pay that. Shirley Davis said that the extra money could go towards equipment for the fire department. Shirley said that she believes that it is $6 now. Town Clerk, Sally Kerce, said that outside the city limits, we have 341 households on our water system that pay $4 per month for fire dues. Shirley Davis said that if you check with all of the fire departments, like Gore, she believes that they charge $250 per year for the first year, $150 for the next and it goes down every year and is eventually a flat rate. She said that $4 per month is nothing for the fire department to provide fire protection. She said that it should at least go to $10 per month and that would be $120 per year. Mayor Ferguson said to give him until the next meeting and he will find out what the other communities pay. He added that he ran the numbers and we collect $16,360 per year. Between that and the contribution from the county, the fire department pulls in about $26,000 for operations. He said that we will discuss it at the next meeting.

Shirley Davis asked if the Downtown Development that is one the budget is what the Mayor thought it would cost to fix up the Ragland building. Mayor Ferguson said that is his best guess on how much it will take. He said that he still needs to get someone to come over and look and make a list of what all needs to be done. Once we have a list, then we can bid it out and get some real numbers. Gwen Fisher said that we may be able to get some help from CDBG. Mayor Ferguson said that he had a meeting with the Northwest Georgia Regional Commission last week and they talked about it. Their representative said that if we could spin it as job creation or downtown development, there may be some money that we could get.

Mayor Ferguson said that he talked with Ron Stephens about the numbers that he put on the budget for the fire department and he was ok with it. He added that he talked with the Regional Commission about writing a fairly large grant in November for equipment for the fire department. We may ask for $70,000. He originally wanted to talk with them about getting a grant for a fire truck but the Regional Commission wasn’t very optimistic about that. He said that we would have better luck writing it for equipment.

Shirley Davis said that it had been mentioned about buying a new truck for the town. She asked if it was in the budget. Mayor Ferguson said that it is in the water budget.

Jimmy Espy said that he noticed that there was $30,000 in the budget last year for park sport facilities. He asked if that was for a concession stand that never got built. Mayor Ferguson said yes. It is in his head but isn’t in the budget. He said that he doesn’t anticipate that happening until next year but he does want it to happen.

Jimmy Espy asked why SPLOST went up from $35,000 to $62,000 this year. Mayor Ferguson said that it was split between the water and general funds last year. He put it all in the general budget this year. There are no plans to use SPLOST funds for water, if we can avoid it.

Mayor Ferguson said that as far as the water budget, we have a few things going on with water and sewer. First off, we are in the process of buying a new truck and the old one is on GovDeals and is up to $6,000 and has 10 more days left in the auction. Also, the pumps at the sewer ponds, the airaters, which keep the water moving on the surface and creates oxygen for the bacteria, they are 20 years old and have been running 24/7. We had someone come out today looking at the spray field pumps and they brought up the airater pumps and he couldn’t believe that they were still running. There are three of them. They are not very powerful pumps so they allow duck weed to grow on the ponds. Duck weed will block out the sunlight and kill the bacteria and that would defeat the purpose of having a sewage pond. As of right now, the only way that we have to remove the duck weed is to manually scrap it off of the top of the water. Mayor Ferguson said that we need to replace the pumps. They cost about $10,000 each and there are three. We could replace one pump at a time over the next few years. He is going to see if there is a grant to help also.

Mayor Ferguson said that before he forgets, he would like to have next week’s meeting at 7:30, if that is ok with everyone. He has to work to make up for the time he will be taking off to go to the training in Athens. Also, in March, he and his wife will be gone until after the 13th so he would like to have the regular council meeting on March 20th and not have a work session. Everyone said that would be fine.

Mayor Ferguson said that the new utility truck is in the budget under vehicle expense. It will be financed for five years. It has been ordered and will be a 2018 Ford F-350 4x4 with a 9ft utility bed. The cost will be about $43,000. What we get when we sale the old truck, we should be able to put that toward the principal.

Gwen Fisher said that Friday after next is Arbor Day and she knows that the rest of the council and the mayor will be gone to training but she was wondering if we could have something at the park. She is planning to go to the school tomorrow and see if some of the kids could participate. If we do it Friday after next, it would be at 2pm at the park. Brick Phillips would come and bring our signs and we would have a speaker. She said that she would like for it to be a child’s program and it could be part of their science class. They could each read a fact about trees. She would like for the kids to plant a tree. Everyone said that it would be fine to have the program.

There being no further business or discussion, the meeting ended at 7:48 p.m.

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Mayor Town Clerk