

Bob Mollette

3rd Ward Councilman

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Jim Kalb, Mayor
728 Second Street
Portsmouth, Ohio 45662

Re: Review of the Proposed 2008 Operating Budget

I reviewed the proposed City of Portsmouth 2008 Operating Budget hand-delivered Friday, December 7, 2007. I documented the following questions and comments for resolution:

1. The projected 2008 Operating Budget General Fund Revenue grand total is \$11,039,000 with a projected General Fund Expenditures of \$11,319,633; this is a projected deficit of \$280,633. According to the City Charter (Section 48, Item 8) the legislative authority can not approve a budget that does not identify all revenue necessary to meet the expenditures.
2. On October 1, 2007, the Auditor submitted a projected 2008 General Fund Revenues of \$10,025,000. The difference between the Mayor's and the Auditor's projected revenue is \$1,014,000. The major differences are as follows:
 - a. City Income Tax – Mayor increased \$200,000
 - b. Real Estate & Personal Property Tax – Mayor increased \$100,000
 - c. Court Collections – Mayor increased \$140,000
 - d. Inheritance Tax – Mayor increased \$250,000
 - e. Interest on Investments – Mayor increased \$100,000
 - f. Miscellaneous Revenues – Mayor increased \$147,000
 - g. Donations – Mayor increased \$20,000

The major differences above total \$980,000. I understand the 2008 projected revenues are expectations used for forecasting purposes, but these expectations are not practical if the revenues are grossly inflated to offset the expected expenditures. Please enhance my confidence your revenue projections are achievable.

3. The proposed 2008 General Fund Expenditures does not reflect any funds (\$0) for the McKinley Pool. The proposed 2007 General Fund Expenditures supplied \$5,000 and appears based on Council Letter No. 2007-87 was under-appropriated by \$1,000. I am requesting McKinley Pool receive appropriate funding for 2008.
4. The Executive Department (101.103) reflects a \$5,000 annual salary increase for the Mayor's position and \$12,480 for a new position of a Human Resources Officer. At this time I would be in favor of a salary increase for the Mayor's position if it would take affect after the next Mayoral Election, which would not affect this budget. Also, please provide additional information concerning the Human Resources Officer.

5. The Municipal Court Department (101.111) budget reflects two (2) new court security officers for \$35,000. The City of Portsmouth has contracted with the Scioto County Sheriff Department in 2006 for \$78,052 and 2007 for \$80,366 which includes two (2) deputies working five (5) hours each day for one year. The 2008 Renewal Contract dated November 5, 2007 was submitted for approval is \$88,374 and states "In the event I (*Sheriff*) fail to receive two fully executed copies of this contract on or before December 21, 2007, I will have no other choice but to terminate these services being provided to Portsmouth Municipal Court at the close of business on December 31, 2007." The 2008 Operating Budget reflects a proposed \$8,000 for contractual/Sheriff (.5299). Provide additional information concerning the proposed municipal court security program with a timeline.
6. The Engineering Department (101.663) budget reflects a proposed 2008 amount of \$15,000 for Demolition (.5297). Does the Demolition include securing (boarding-up broken doors and windows) vacant houses for safety? Based on the aging housing within the City of Portsmouth is this amount adequate? How does our land reutilization program interface and what monies are required to operate this program?
7. The Police Department (101.221) budget proposes a Code Enforcement Officer for \$20,800. Does the City currently employ a Code Enforcement Officer? The issue was raised February 13, 2006 by downtown retailers concerning parking in front or nearby their businesses for potential customers as critical and important to the success of our downtown. At times when good manners and common sense do not exist; the City must enforce our two-hour limited parking codified ordinance. The two-hour limited parking areas are properly marked. The previous approach by our Code Enforcement was unsuccessful because the expectations of compliance were unknown until after the violation was documented on a citation with a fine. What is the current status of this program and the plan for implementation?
8. The Police Department (101.221) budget proposes \$82,000 expense for Special Duty. Describe the Special Duty Program (duties/policies/procedures/associated costs) and the proposed events planned. Also the 2008 General Fund Revenue estimates \$5,000 for Campus Security and \$135,000 in revenue for Police – Special Duty/Admin. I support the overtime opportunities for our officers and acknowledge they are an important asset. Are these efforts self-sufficient? Again, describe the program and include future plans.
9. The deliberation to approve the City's Operating Budget should be a time to discuss taxpayer priorities and develop a strategic plan for responding to those needs. Constituents have expressed anger about the impact drug trafficking and prostitution is having on the quality of life in their neighborhoods. I expressed those views in letter #07-052 dated October 4, 2007 and appealed to the Mayor to consider involving the appropriate departments for developing a plan to gain public support for resolving our problems with prostitution and associated crimes in our neighborhoods. Constituents have expressed anger about unsafe conditions from the lack of traffic law enforcement in our residential districts. Families have stated the unsafe conditions that are created by speeding vehicles and vehicles not stopping at stop signs and red lights are unacceptable. I requested enforcement of our traffic laws and suggested possible solutions as documented in letter #06-044 dated June 1, 2006. Does the City have a plan to address these concerns?
10. The Fire Department (101.223) budget includes \$9,714 for back pay per Dispatch Contract, please explain.

11. The Fire Department (101.223) budget includes \$150,000 for Retirement Pay. I understand the reason for budgeting for retirees but does the City need to plan for other departments?
12. The Public Service Department (101.117) budget indicates \$315,000 for fuel (.5354). This is an increase of \$20,000 for the 2007 Budget. It is difficult to project the price for fuel but consumption should be scrutinized to assure the taxpayers efforts are being taken to conserve. Describe what measures have been implemented to conserve fuel and any future strategy.
13. The Public Service Grounds Recreation Division (101.335) reflects \$148,225 and does not include funds to support the Council Trust for Recreation (810) and Playground Trust (851). Does the City have a strategic plan for maintaining our City parks?
14. The City of Portsmouth received a copy of a US23 & US52 Safety Engineering Study dated June 2007 (revised) which was prepared for the Ohio Department of Transportation District 9 by the HNTB Corporation. The study included short term/low cost recommendations, medium term/medium cost recommendations, and long term/high cost recommendations. The study recommended the short term/low cost countermeasures to be performed by the City or ODOT. I subtotaled the short term/low cost estimated expenditures at \$230,000. Update the status of these safety countermeasures and timeline.
15. The Wastewater Summary indicates estimated combined revenue of \$2,462,260 for Portsmouth and New Boston. How much revenue comes from New Boston? Provide an updated status for the City's Long Term Control Plan for Combined Sewer Overflows.
16. The Public Utilities Flood Defense – Operations Division (621.225) indicates a proposed \$23,574 for three (3) new Probationary Common Laborers. Describe job duties.
17. The Water Work Summary indicates estimated revenue from Water Rents of \$4,700,000 and includes a projected three (3%) percent rate increase effective January 1, 2008. Document the rationale for a rate increase. Provide an update on the status of the previous water contract with the Southern Ohio Growth Partnership to sell water to the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility and the status of the MIEX project.

There are many challenges facing our community and I feel positive by involving the public with open discussions we will meet those challenges. If you have any questions concerning the request for additional information or need clarification, contact me.

Respectfully,



Bob Mollette, 3rd Ward Advocate and Representative on City Council

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cc: City Auditor
City Solicitor
Jo Ann Aeh, Clerk (Record)