

City of Rome
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
March 17, 2021

PRESENT:

Committee Chairman, Sundai Stevenson (Zoom)
City Commissioner Randy Quick
City Commissioner Mark Cochran
Finance Director Toni Rhinehart
Assistant Finance Director Kraig Ingalsbe
City Manager Sammy Rich

Committee Chair, Sundai Stevenson called the meeting to order.

Ms. Rhinehart started off explaining that we do not normally distribute or meet about the January and February Financial statements. The beginning numbers are not final at this time. She did state that while we do not usually meet, this would be an opportunity to start the year and see the budgets and how we are doing so far in some important areas. We are hopeful that 2021 is going to be a better year.

GENERAL FUND:

Ms. Rhinehart discussed the highlights in General Fund. Title Tax Fees are up over last year. The new distribution allocation began late in 2020 with the City of Rome getting a higher percentage of collections. This is split between the School Board and the City based off of a State set allocation percentage. Intangible taxes are consistent with last year and Motor Vehicle tax continues to stay flat. Local Option Sales Tax is a highlight so far this year with collections being over 2020 by nearly \$200,000 year to date. Real estate transfer tax is down from last year and overall business licenses are slightly above 2020. Facility rentals continue to be down with hope for brighter days ahead. Police fines were slightly ahead of last year for the month but still below 2020 year to date. This continues to be a trend. Total operating revenues are down mostly due to the timing of GA Power Franchise fee for 2020. This is recorded on the GL in March 2021 and was below 2020 by over \$200,000. Commissioner Cochran raised a question about the possibility of auditing franchise fees. Ms. Rhinehart is going to get with Joe Smith about the possibility of conducting an audit. She stated that there are usually GMA recommended vendors that can be utilized for such services.

Public Safety expenses are down from 2020. This is due to being short staffed and comparing three payrolls in January 2020 to two payrolls in 2021. They are currently in the hiring process and are hopeful to be filling some of the positions soon. The Public Works division expenses are also down from 2020 due to the payroll comparison, changes in personnel and restructuring within several PW departments. The Cemetery began an inmate crew contract with Floyd County at the end of 2020.

WATER & SEWER FUND:

Water usage revenues are in line with last year and a little under budget. Other operating revenues and connection fees are slightly below last year. Total operating revenues are below last year by about \$167,000. Most all departments in water are within budget.

BUILDING INSPECTION:

Revenues are down in Building Inspection and slightly below budget. Expenses are also down and below budget. Sammy took an opportunity to discuss HB 302 and the impact of that with the future Building Inspection structure and how we operate going forward. It will impact how we charge for permits. Sammy has spoken with Senator Chuck Hufstetler about our model and how we currently operate a very fair and consistent permit system and do not take from the enterprise fund to fund other funds. We may be required to sell flat rate permits and might be required to purchase other software. Commissioner Quick asked about the time table. GMA is trying to help with advocating for cities. The fee structure could be set at a certain level regardless of the size of house or construction. Commissioner Cochran talked about a bill that allowed privatizing Building Inspection. In time we will know more clearly the direction this will be moving.

TRANSIT FUND:

All Transit revenues are down from 2020 by about \$25,000, and no grant reimbursement funds have been requested for 2021. They are still working to implement their Transit plan that came from the study done in 2020. We have a Teams meeting with GDOT tomorrow to discuss the Transit budget amendments and procedures required moving forward. Commissioner Cochran asked if there was any discussion about purchasing Electric buses. Ms. Rhinehart stated that a hybrid bus had been looked at and that they are currently looking at a Trolley style bus to hopefully entice ridership. This transportation might be utilized with the two area colleges. Commissioner Cochran mentioned that Audi has made a commitment to only design/build electric going forward and will be phasing this in over the next 5 years. He felt we need to see what funding might be available for electric buses going forward. Ms. Rhinehart stated that we have gotten some information on how to sell/dispose of the Tripper bus and that the fee structure is unreasonable for what we might sell them for. The funding has also changed for Transit and we have been awarded some extra funding through mid-2022. Commissioner Quick asked about a change in status from a Metropolitan city and how it would affect us going forward.

BID FUND:

TOURISM FUND:

Gift Shop sales and rental revenues for the History Center are tracking slightly above 2020 levels. Total Revenues are up YTD by about \$23,000. Expenses are down from 2020 by about \$11,000. They are off to a really good start for 2021. The improvements at the History Center look great and they are doing a great job marketing the center and the space.

FIRE FUND:

Revenues are up in anticipation of the pay adjustments made for Public Safety in late 2020. Expenses are down slightly due to the additional payroll in 2020 compared with 2021. One fire payroll is over \$300,000.

HOTEL MOTEL TAX FUND:

Hotel Motel tax revenues are down slightly from last year. January collections we up slightly which come from December stays. We are hopeful that better times are ahead as more people begin traveling. Commissioner Quick stated that we have had several Tennis Tournaments as well which greatly enhances tourism in the area.

INSURANCE FUND:

Revenues are in line with 2020. Expenses are within budget and down from 2020. Claims were significantly up in 2020 and so far have remained within budget for 2021.

WORKER'S COMP FUND:

Claims have been down for the last few years. Insurance premiums have gone down as a result of lower claims. We have paid ½ of 2021 premiums.

TAX ALLOCATION DISTRICT FUND:

ENTITLEMENT FUND:

PARKING FUND:

Parking revenues are up for the two months compared with 2020. This is positive and we are hopeful that this is a sign of more people being downtown. Revenues have covered expenses at this point in the year.

FORUM PARKING FUND:

Forum parking revenues are behind 2020. Commissioner Cochran inquired about the jurors using this parking deck and whether they are paying for this use. Mr. Rich stated that Floyd County did not want to pay for this service. There was discussion that the City is managing the deck and whether fees should be collected for this parking. Mr. Rich discussed the purpose of the Forum and what the intentions were when it was constructed.

SPLOST FUND:

LANDFILL FUND:

Fee revenues continue to track about the same as 2020. Expenses are also in line with 2020.

SOLID WASTE FUND:

Revenues are up due to the increase in General fund contributions. Expenses are down from 2020 due to some costly repair and maintenance expenses in 2020. There were also some personnel changes in late 2020 that have reduced expense for 2021 along with the 3rd payroll in January 2020.

TENNIS FUND:

Revenues and expenses are reflective of activity at both facilities. The Tennis Center is directly funded from Hotel/Motel tax collections. They receive 25% of Hotel Motel collections so they were greatly impacted from the reduced Hotel Motel revenue in 2020. Taking depreciation out of the picture they are operating at about a \$49,000 loss YTD. The downtown center is currently operating with a FOB system that has lowered operational costs significantly. Commissioner Quick told a story of the Tennis Center at Berry having a reputation of being a great tennis center. It is early in the year but we are hopeful that tournaments will increase going forward.

We hope to have more information at the next meeting with a full quarter to report. The Finance Department is getting ready for the external audit to being in a few weeks. With no further discussion and no other items to review, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted

Toni Rhinehart