



Tuesday, November 25, 2014
LRCent Committee Board Presentation & Report

Introductions

Co-Chair: Dr. Sybil Jordan Hampton

Co-Chair: Peter McKinney O'Connor

(Recognize any other committee members that are present)

Revenue and Capital Projects – Summary as of September

Dr. Hampton

As we near the end of the third year of sales tax collections it has unfortunately become very apparent that revenue growth has been slower than anticipated. As you can see in the first slide from January- July 2014 the City has collected \$16,689,593 in the 5/8 Cent Operating and \$10,029,367 in the 3/8 Cent Capital tax with a combined total of \$26,613,191 which is only up 0.40% from the previous year.

From 2012 to date we have collected a total of \$45,052,936 in the 3/8 Cent Capital and expended \$58,891,732 (Part of which is through short-term Financing). While we all remain hopeful that our local economy will improve as a New Year approaches, it is understood that adjustments may need to be made and priorities reevaluated moving forward.

My fellow committee members and I constantly remind the public that this is the third year of a ten year process and we are committed to ensuring that the City honors many of the top priorities that citizens indicated are important to them.

Dr. Hampton

3/8 Cent Capital Projects

Public Safety

One area that has been high on the list of priorities has been public safety. Because of the leadership of The Mayor, City Board and City Manager, your decision to short-term finance projects has resulted in taking care of some very critical capital needs.

As you know the Public Safety Radio System Upgrades were completed earlier this year. This project was vital to providing a reliable and updated emergency communications systems, an important resource for our police and fire departments. Just two months ago we celebrated the dedication and opening of the 12th Street Station an investment that will help encourage revitalization efforts.

The hiring of additional police officers, the opening of a new fire station and hiring additional code staff has also meant that the City's Fleet Department has had to purchase new and replace aging vehicles. All of the updates, new construction and purchases total over \$30 million in capital investments to public safety over the last three years.

Public Works

Another top priority that citizens have expressed is an interest in our aging infrastructure. This need is being addressed as the City's Public Works Department has worked diligently conducting well over fifty (50) public meetings in various wards as it carries out the goals set forth by the City Board in the 2013-2015 capital infrastructure improvement plan. So far over \$17 million has been allocated or spent on street, drainage and sidewalk construction. Additional funds have been spent to overlay approximately 220 streets throughout the city.

Other areas

The Little Rock Parks department continues to make improvements to enhance the quality of life for our citizens by providing facilities like the Centre at University Park which was completed last year replacing the old Adult Leisure Center that burned in 2009, and recently breaking ground for the construction of future West Central Community Center. Park upgrades have included the completion of a trail loop in War Memorial Park and construction of five (5) fields at the Natural Steps Ball Complex dedicated to soccer and lacrosse.

The Little Rock Zoo also continues to update its exhibits to provide a quality experience for visitors from all over the state. Two of the most popular attractions this year were the opening of the tiger cub exhibit and the diamond express train.

Our Information and Technology Department has continued its efforts to provide the tools to City employees to help do their jobs. They have spent over \$1.3 million to purchase new computers and software to replace an aging technological infrastructure and enhance backup systems.

All of these capital projects have helped us address many of the pressing needs that the City has not been able to deal with in the past due to limited funding and I am pleased to report that we are making progress and all of these dollars help to provide jobs to our local economy.

Peter McKinney O'Connor

5/8 Cent Operational

While Capital Projects are essential and it is exciting to visibly see much needed construction taking place it also takes a dedicated staff to help make these things happen. The 5/8 Cent Operational revenue has helped to fill a vacancies and provide needed services for our citizens.

Public Safety

As Dr. Hampton mentioned a top priority to citizens was public safety and a commitment was made that fifty-two (52) new police officers would be hired and

twenty-seven (27) grant funded positions would be retained. While that commitment has been fulfilled, the Police Department continues to have some turnover. Currently there are twenty-one (21) individuals in recruit school expected to graduate in June 2015. As of October 22 there were thirteen (13) vacancies.

Twelve (12) new 911/311 Communications call takers have been hired but vacancies still remain. A commitment was made for the Little Rock Fire Department to hire additional firefighters. So far twelve (12) new firefighters have been hired and eighteen (18) positions which were originally grant funded have been retained.

The Department of Housing and Neighborhood Programs has fulfilled its commitment to hire twenty (20) Code Enforcement Officers to patrol our neighborhoods and efficiently respond to violations and four (4) new Animal Services Staff.

Another component of addressing public safety is dealing with the human aspect. As you know last year the Department of Community Programs contracted with five (5) service agencies in our community to help provide re-entry services to individuals who were previously incarcerated. This is a critical step in helping to curb criminal activity in our communities.

It is important to highlight the success of several of these programs.

Our House, Inc.:

Enrolled: 23 program participants

Placed: 12 participants in employment

Goodwill industries of Arkansas (Transitional Employment Opportunities):

Enrolled: 64 program participants

Placed: 35 participants placed in employment

Goodwill Industries of Arkansas (Re-Entry beyond Disabilities):

Enrolled: 31 program participants

Placed: 16 participants placed in employment

As you may recall last year the City of Little Rock received an award from Arkansas Business as being a city of distinction in Workforce Development because of our successful Pilot Re-Entry Sidewalk Program which was a partnership between the Department of Community Programs and Public Works. Since 2012 these employees have completed 81,614 square feet of new sidewalks. This program has helped individuals who are willing to work hard and learn, the ability to become full-time employees with the city, be employed in the private sector or gain other professional experience.

It is now being expanded to other departments in the City. The Fleet department has five (5) auto technician trainees, the Little Rock Zoo has four (4) and the department of Housing & Neighborhood Programs has hired one (1) Animal Technician trainee.

They have also launched an evening career center which has enrolled fifty (50) participants to complete certifications in GED, welding, auto mechanics, computer assisted design and certified nursing. It continues its efforts with private industry to increase employment opportunities for its participants.

Closing

From the Capital to the Operational side, the commitments made to the citizens of our city is being met on many levels. As a committee we value our responsibility to ask questions and request information that ensures accountability and transparency and all of this information is available online at www.lrcent.org . We certainly welcome the public to attend any of our meetings which are advertised and held quarterly.

All of these accomplishments are part of our commitment to the citizens of this City to use their tax dollars wisely. This is a ten year process and there is still much work to be done, however we are on track.