

**MINUTES OF THE BUDGET WORKSHOP
OF THE CAREFREE TOWN COUNCIL**

WHEN: TUESDAY, APRIL 13, 2021

WHERE: ZOOM WEB <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3229729660>

MEETING ID: 322 972 9660

TIME: 3:30 P.M.

Town Council Attending:

Mayor Les Peterson
Vice Mayor John Crane
Councilmember Vince D'Aliesio
Councilmember Tony Geiger
Councilmember Stephen Hatcher
Councilmember Cheryl Kroyer

Town Council Absent:

None

Staff Present:

Gary Neiss, Town Administrator; Alex Orozco, Communications Coordinator; Stacey Bridgen-Denzak, Planning Director and Zoning Administrator - Steve Prokopek, Economic Development Director; Michael Tibbet, Chief Building Official; Travis Johnson, Public Works Superintendent; Dennis Randolph, Code Enforcement Officer.

Mayor Peterson called the Budget Workshop to order at 3:30 p.m.

AGENDA:

ITEM #1 Workshop to discuss Fiscal Year 2021-2022 budget.

Town Administrator, Gary Neiss presented the FY 2021/22 Budget Workshop via PowerPoint. This was the 1st of 4 public meetings to be held to discuss the budget. The next workshop will be April 27, 2021 at 3:30 p.m. Mr. Neiss outlined the budget process and timeline of future budget workshops to be held in order to review with Town Council the respective needs of the organization.

Town Administrator Neiss explained, the Budget process began earlier this year with the Council Work Plan. He plans to continue this process over the next couple years and revisit the work plan to identify how the Town is performing and to gain some metrics of performance for the organization. Mr. Neiss defined the four pillars, which make up the Plan:

1. Quality Community Development
2. Infrastructure Management
3. Economic Development & Financial Stability
4. Communications, Marketing and Community Engagement

Mr. Neiss pointed out that in the near future, when the new Town Engineer is selected, a work plan associated with infrastructure will be presented to Council. In addition, Planning Director, Stacey Bridge-Denzak will be working on information to provide to Council, regarding the general plan update.

Back in early January Town Administrator Neiss discussed with various Department heads that they needed to begin evaluating their department workloads. Mr. Neiss added he had changed the budget process this year, from a line item budget to a policy based budget, which describes the purpose of each department, associated workloads, and deliverables of each department. Mr. Neiss encouraged questions and discussion between staff and Council regarding associated Departmental workloads, prioritizations and the associated costs to perform their respective duties for the next fiscal year.

Town Administrator Neiss presented the organizational structure of the Town, 5 departments with Divisions within those departments with a core staff of 16 employees. Mr. Neiss invited each department head to discuss their respective roles and trends within their departments as well as anticipated costs or special projects that might need additional attention or focus over the balance of the next fiscal year.

Public Safety Department

Public Safety Advisory Committee

Town Administrator Neiss presented an overview of the committee's first introductory meeting. The first phase of the Public Safety Committee is to revisit the contract with Rural Metro. The Committee plans to meet with folks in Cave Creek to better understand the direction that they are taking and design a path for Carefree in the future. The next phase is to evaluate the level of service with MCSO regarding traffic calming, increase the patrols within the neighborhoods of Carefree and explore the use of photo radar to supplement the traffic control. Explaining, reports and formal recommendations will be made to Town Council to illustrate what changes they would recommend to the level of services in Carefree. Mr. Neiss spoke to the associated costs with the Rural Metro and Maricopa County Sheriff's Office contracts for the next fiscal year. The next Public Safety Advisory Committee meeting to be held May 12, 2021.

Administrative Services

Town Administrator Neiss presented an overview of the Department and the Divisions within.

- **Town Management** –Oversees the daily operation of the Town, administers all contracts, communicates with Town Council and citizens, and is the main point of contact for the organization. Workload of the Department over the next fiscal year consists of governmental compliance such as MS4, infrastructure coordination, the water acquisition and street pavement maintenance. Town Administrator Neiss is the point person for the Public Safety Committee. Mr. Neiss outlined the budget impacts of the Administrative Services Department such as inflationary increases on contracts and special projects throughout the Town.

Town Administrator Neiss presented for Town Clerk, Kandace French-Contreras

- **Town Clerk** – A Division of 2 employees. Mr. Neiss explained the roles and responsibilities of the two full time employees and the dual role of the office. Town Administrator Neiss outlined many of the responsibilities of the two staff members who handle many matters; custodians of the public records, management of State mandated programs, election officials, safeguard investments of monies. The Town Clerks Department supports the Town Administrator and staff as needed, processes payroll and provides support to the Town Attorney. Mr. Neiss recognized Jim Keen, Town Accountant/Deputy Clerk for his many years of dedication, acknowledging Mr. Keen's management and compliance of the audit. Jim Keen also handles all matters relating to IT, network security and maintenance of server administration.

The Clerk's Department is looking to update the outdated accounting budget software which will better conform to the new budget format and facilitate a better transition in the future.

Town Administrator Neiss responded to Councilmember Tony Geiger pertaining to the Town Engineer, timeframe of hiring and how it fits into the budget. Mr. Neiss explained that the position has been re-advertised as the finalists that were selected during the recent interview process had been hired on by other jurisdictions. Mr. Neiss provided the budgeted competitive salary and benefits package for the position and anticipates filling the position sometime in late May early June.

Mr. Neiss responded to Councilmember Vince D' Aliesio regarding the consideration of contracting with a recruiter for the position. Mr. Neiss explained his concerns with the costs associated in utilizing a recruiter.

Mr. Neiss introduced Alex Orozco, Communications Coordinator

- **Communications** – Communication Coordinator Alex Orozco presented an overview of the Communications Division's role, workload and budget impacts via PowerPoint. Ms. Orozco expressed the importance of developing a communications plan and strategies for the Organization, both publicly and internally, outlining details and strategies to accomplish these goals. Ms. Orozco outlined the plan of expanding the Town's digital presence and focus on the enhancement of imagery and Town branding. Ms. Orozco updated Council on the progress and implementation of the new Visitor Center, expressing the importance of attaining new handout materials and furnishing the space in a way that is welcoming as well as informative. Communications Coordinator Orozco itemized budget impacts and strategies such as costs associated with marketing within social medias, updating the website through Civic Plus and the acquisition of tangible marketing materials.

Ms. Orozco responded to questions from Councilmember Stephen Hatcher regarding feedback from business owners with respect to the newsletters that were sent out. She explained that the program has not yet been fully implemented. She noted that the contact information for business owners needs to be updated. Ms. Orozco informed that she has received great feedback and built great relationships by creating this layer of transparency with central businesses by extending conversations with business owners in person, while strategizing ways to acquire updated contact information.

Community Development

Mr. Neiss introduced Stacey Bridge- Denzak, Planning Director and Zoning Administrator

- **Planning and Zoning Division** – Planning Director and Zoning Administrator Stacey Bridge-Denzak began her presentation by referencing the work plan document that identifies the vision that relates to premier distinct communities, high quality and experience based retail. Ms. Bridge-Denzak explained that the Planning and Zoning Division is all about delivering this vision by way of the built environment, believing that Planning and Zoning is the Division that represents what everybody sees. Ms. Bridge-Denzak explained that this is accomplished through the General Plan and required updates thereto. Noting the General Plan is basically the blueprint of how the Town plans to develop, Ms. Bridge-Denzak expressed the importance of the Zoning Ordinance, Town Code and Subdivision Regulations which are also important documents that are the framework of supporting that overall vision. Director Bridge-Denzak recognized the significance of having an Economic Development Director on board as the two divisions work in concert to support the goals of the Community Development Department.

Ms. Bridge-Denzak continued to explain, Planning and Zoning meets with Commissioners, Councilmembers, citizens, applicants, businesses and other interest to discuss development plans, cases and permits and support general development opportunities in Carefree. The department works closely with the Building Department, processes ROW permits and offers support for questions relating to Carefree and its physical development. Director Bridge-Denzak emphasized the importance of the archiving of the Department's records and minutes.

Presenting an overview of the workload of the Planning and Zoning Department, Ms. Bridge-Denzak shared numbers of applications, text amendments, public meetings and hearings, site inspections and review of Building permits for compliance with the Zoning Ordinance. In addition, the Department manages the ongoing Crosswalks Study. The amount of workload for the department was tremendous.

Director Bridge-Denzak outlined budget impacts of the Planning and Zoning Division which include the General Plan update and update of the Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning ordinance maintains that vision and supports the development of the community at large. Ms. Bridge-Denzak expressed the importance of the safe storage of the Divisions archive documents, working toward acquiring space at a local storage facility for this purpose and getting our Code/Ordinance.

Vice Mayor John Crane inquired regarding the timeframe of the General Plan update process. Director Bridge-Denzak explained the goal is to hire a consultant by the end of 2021 and begin the process in early 2022, then bringing it forward for a vote by the residents in 2023. Additionally, Vice Mayor Crane questioned the process in updating the Zoning Ordinance. Ms. Bridge-Denzak outlined the process. Informing that the updates first go through Planning and Zoning for recommendation then to Town Council for final approval. Ms. Denzak explained that the update needs to be looked at holistically, to

ensure how we want development within the Town to occur. Ms. Bridge-Denzak further explained that both updates will happen concurrently. Councilmember Kroyer asked for clarification of the referenced Planning and Zoning related policy documents. Director Bridge-Denzak explained the Baker Study is specific to Town Center; the General plan is a policy document that is mandated by the State and requires an update every 10 years. Ms. Bridge-Denzak noted that the General Plan is that policy document that the Zoning Ordinance builds upon.

Councilmember Stephen Hatcher had questions related to the digitization and safe storage of the division's documents. Ms. Bridge-Denzak explained that most of the digitizing of Planning and Zoning records is done by Department staff in-house. Ms. Denzak further explained that the Planning and Zoning minutes are stored in fireproof cabinets, but all other documents are not, emphasizing the importance of acquiring space at a local storage facility.

Town Administrator Gary Neiss introduced Michael Tibbett, Chief Building Official.

- **Building Safety Division** - Mr. Tibbett detailed the role of the Building Safety Division, including the number of inspections and plan reviews. Mr. Tibbett meets with developers, homeowners, contractors and architects to resolve complex building code issues and ensure compliance as well as provide safe guards for the public and properties related to construction. Chief Building Official Tibbett expressed that the workload is heavy, given the number of inspections, site inspections, plan reviews. He described his work on the Hampton Inn.

Mr. Tibbett provided the Council with information on budget impacts, the need for professional services, and future anticipated replacement of the Town vehicle, a 2012 Ford Escape, assigned to him.

Vice Mayor Crane commented that Building permit fees should cover building permit inspection costs. Have building permit fees increased accordingly with the number of inspections? Mr. Tibbett provided clarification noting that the Town's building permit fees are some of the highest and have not increased. Mr. Tibbett further explained the permit fee calculation process.

Town Administrator Gary Neiss introduced Steve Prokopek, Economic Development Director.

- **Economic Development Division** –Steve Prokopek, Economic Development Director presented goals and dynamics of the Economic Development division. Mr. Prokopek expressed the importance of product development, including creating a redevelopment area, putting tools in place that will allow the Town to create a built environment, beginning with ideas. Mr. Prokopek further explained, from there we can take those ideas, and move toward a strong marketing and outreach program. Director Prokopek explained that most of the budget impacts for the Economic Development Division are in concert with the Planning and Zoning Division, feeding directly into the General Plan Update as well as the Zoning Ordinance updates. Mr. Prokopek explained from a budget perspective, the dynamic balance between product development and business development, outreach and marketing.

Director Prokopek concluded that the budget request is more about building tools, redevelopment area plan and updating the economic analysis and information.

Town Administrator Neiss introduced Dennis Randolph, Code Enforcement Officer

Code Enforcement Division – Dennis Randolph, Code Enforcement Officer described his role within the division. Mr. Randolph investigates complaints, acts as Court Bailiff and performs duties related to the court. Mr. Randolph processes business licenses and vendor certificates. Dennis also assists with the front of office whenever needed. Mr. Randolph presented data related to his workload relating to the number of business licenses and vendor licenses processed as well as the number of investigations conducted. Officer Randolph stated that his division's budget request is small with one request, the replacement of the 10 year old Ford Escape.

Town Administrator Neiss introduced the Public Works Department.

Public Works Department

- **Town Engineer Division**- Mr. Neiss provided an overview of the process and timeline of hiring a Town Engineer, further defining the role of the Town Engineer to oversee agency governmental compliance requirements, manage public infrastructure and assets and coordinate workload for facilities and ROW Division, MS4 compliance requirements, dust control permitting requirements, drainage and street repairs, inspections for grading and drainage compliance and review plans for compliance issues and oversee ROW permits and manage street projects, which is key to the Town Engineer's role. Mr. Neiss added an additional aspect of the Town Engineers position, putting capital projects together, reviewing the assets and fundamentally putting a plan together.

Mr. Neiss shared respective budget impacts of this Division to include a new truck for the Town Engineer, consulting services to develop data for street maintenance programs, GPS/GIS work and adding new software to support the position.

Councilmember Stephen Hatcher asked if the vehicles the Town acquires are leased or purchased. Mr. Neiss informed Mr. Hatcher that the vehicles are purchased through a State process, not leased.

Town Administrator Neiss responded to questions pertaining to how the Town Engineer and the Carefree Water Company will interface. He explained the Town Engineer will be overseeing the Public Works department which is adjacent to the Carefree Water Co. Mr. Neiss sees the Town Engineer position having office space in Town Hall as well as a presence at Public Works and as a result, Mr. Neiss sees a close alignment in coordination between the Town Engineer and the Carefree Water Company, more specifically, Greg Crossman.

Mayor Peterson commended Town Administrator, Gary Neiss and Town Engineer, Greg Crossman for all the extra work that the two of them in particular have done, expressing that it's very necessary. Mayor Peterson acknowledged the outstanding job that they have done and recognized that it is over and above what all else they are trying to accomplish.

Town Administrator Gary Neiss introduced Travis Johnson the supervisor for the Public Works Division.

Facilities/ROW – Public Works Supervisor Travis Johnson presented information on the four personnel, including him, and the work and responsibilities of the Public Works department. He explained the role of the Division, including the maintenance and repair of public facilities, safety surveys, ROW maintenance, traffic signs, signage maintenance, equipment maintenance and other responsibilities. Mr. Johnson presented an overview of Public Works workload expressing how busy it has been. The acquisition of a brush chipper has cut the work load in half. The Public Works team has maintained the thinning of tree canopies, painted walls and buildings within the Town Center Gardens, building of a storage facility for the golf cart and storage and built out the greenroom for a visitor center, meeting, office and event space. The Public Works department installed a new drainage culvert in the cemetery to stop erosion along the driveway, treated the surface pavers of the amphitheater and painted the floor of the splash pad. Mr. Johnson emphasized the amount of ongoing maintenance and repairs needed to the lights and electrical outlet covers within Town Center Gardens.

Councilman Vince D' Aliesio acknowledged the Public Works Division for all of their hard work. Mr. D' Aliesio inquired about the cost savings of Public Works building of the recent shed as opposed to hiring out the work. Mr. Johnson responded that there was a large savings in performing the work themselves.

Town Administrator Gary Neiss presented for Carol Comacho, Consolidated Court Administrator

Municipal Court Department

- **Consolidated Court** – Mr. Neiss provided information pertaining to the role of the Consolidated Court. Mr. Neiss reminded the group of the new administration at the Courts. The new presiding Judge was appointed last month, Tara Parascandola. Mr. Neiss explained Carol Camacho is the new Court Administrator. Town Administrator Neiss acknowledged Carol for all she does in assisting Judge Parascandola in making it a smooth transition. Mr. Neiss outlined the role of the Court; processing all civil and criminal citations issued in Carefree and Cave Creek, responding to public inquiries, maintaining accurate court records and distributing monies received according to Statute. Mr. Neiss presented that the workload of the Court increased in citations due to the change in MCSO leadership, and incoming citations due to bike week, legislative changes increase inquiries from the public and daily operations are often difficult with minimal staff. Budget impacts include new forms due to legislative changes and postage costs that increased operational costs.

Councilman Tony Geiger questioned if there will be statistics with DUIs and other citations? Mr. Neiss explained that the reports take a while to process through the court, but there are monthly data reports provided through MCSO.

Town Administrator reminded the group of the next budget workshop to be held April 27, 2021.

Lastly, Mr. Neiss presented an overview of Capital Projects. Funds to support maintaining existing infrastructure such as providing street maintenance projects, improving the safety of pedestrian crosswalks, replacing signage, maintain our assets to reduce vandalism by adding security cameras, pet repairs, Town Center revitalizations initiatives and the potentially the water consolidation project.

Mr. Neiss presented a schedule of future Budget meetings:

- April 27th Budget overview of revenues & expenses
- May 4th Tentative budget – bottom line adopted
- June 1st Budget adoption
- July 1st New Fiscal Year begins

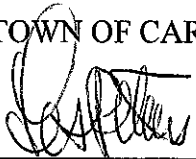
ITEM #2 Adjournment.

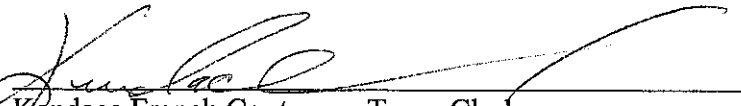
The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

DATED this 15th day of April, 2021.

TOWN OF CAREFREE

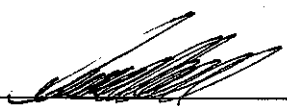
BY: 
Samantha Gesell, Planning Clerk

TOWN OF CAREFREE

Les Peterson, Mayor

Attest:

Kandace French Contreras, Town Clerk

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the Budget Workshop Meeting of the Town of Carefree held April 16, 2021. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.


Samantha Gesell, Planning Clerk