Ward 5 Citizens May Forum Minutes

A special guest, Sgt. Jim Bartolomei joined us for our May 20th Forum meeting at Dino's.

He answered a variety of questions: mostly about traffic and general questions about the police department. He provided some data sheets from 3 areas of ward 5 from traffic speed counters, indicating that there are a few drivers speeding but in general there is quite good compliance within low risk and compliant measurements of speed.

He outlined the coming changes in the PD with the retirement of Chief Pratt. The Interim Chief will be Isaias Cruz a long-term officer, currently Captain of our PD, effective August 1, 2024

The main issue raised by those attending was truck traffic on the southern end of Homestead at night during the truck restriction hours. Sgt. Bartolomei indicated that there is a plan to try to dedicate some officers to traffic enforcement. He indicated that activity could also lead to other enforcement opportunities related to guns and drugs, and he indicated that he believes driver behavior would change within a few months if enforcement was increased.

1) City Council Update:

Mayor Garcia has presented the new budget which includes a \$3M increase to the tax levy, bringing it to the tax ceiling for our city. He indicated there is some new growth that has not been included yet. It was also pointed out during the meeting that the free cash has not been certified yet, so that will impact the financial picture also. Hearings are taking place during May and June with a vote to make any cuts at City Council set for June 13th at 6PM. The City Council can ONLY make cuts to the proposed budget, additions or shifts in spending are not allowed. During the budget hearing our Assessor predicts home values will increase 10%. Based on the initial presentation, expect higher taxes in the new fiscal year.

A change being considered at the next City Council meeting is a moving from an elected Treasurer to an appointed Treasurer by the City Council. If this passes the City Council the Mayor has indicated he supports it moving forward as a ballot question for voters this November 5th.

2) Traffic Light at Apremont and Rt. 202: The long-awaited traffic light installation at the top of Aprement and Rt. 202 is now projected to be completed by the end of May (yes, this month)! Please let me know if you see it installed before I do!

3) CPA ballot question:

After much debate and many delays, and two petitions filed by citizens seeking to reduce the rate, the City Council recently passed the CPA question to reduce the rate to 1% from 1.5% to be placed on the ballot this November. approved it. If a majority vote yes, the rate will decrease to 1%. If a majority vote against it, the rate will remain at 1.5%.

Approved may 6 2024 p.),

Community Preservation Act Ballot Question and Draft Summary

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Ballot Ouestion

Shall the City of Holyoke amend the current Community Preservation Act real estate surcharge, as established in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of Chapter 44B of the Massachusetts General Laws, and which amendment of such surcharge is permissible pursuant to Section 16 of Chapter 44B of the Massachusetts General Laws, as approved by its legislative body, from 1.5% to 1.0%, a summary of which appears below?

Summary of Question

On May __, 2024, the City Council voted, without taking a position, to place a question on the ballot which will allow voters to reduce the current Community Preservation Act real estate surcharge from 1.5% to 1.0%.. The question will be approved, and the real estate surcharge shall be so reduced, if a majority of the voters voting on the ballot question vote "yes". The question will not be approved, and the real estate surcharge shall remain the same, if a majority of the voters voting on the ballot question vote "no".

On November 8, 2016, the voters of the City of Holyoke voted to accept Sections 3 to 7 of Chapter 44B, known as the Community Preservation Act (hereinafter referred to as the "Act"). By accepting the Act, a funding source was established to enable the City of Holyoke to: (1) acquire, create and preserve open space, which includes land for parks, playgrounds and athletic fields; (2) acquire, preserve and rehabilitate historic resources such as historic community buildings and artifacts; and (3) acquire, create, and preserve and support community housing to help local families meet their housing needs. By accepting the Act, a surcharge of 1.5% was assessed on real estate on an annual basis beginning in Fiscal Year 2018. Exempted from the surcharge are: (1) property owned and occupied as a domicile by any person who would qualify for low income housing or low or moderate income senior housing in the City of Holyoke, as defined in Section 2 of the Act; (2) \$100,000 of the value of each taxable parcel of residential real property; and (3) \$100,000 of the value of each taxable parcel of class three, commercial property, and class four, industrial property as defined in section 2A of said chapter 59.

If the voters vote "Yes", the surcharge will be reduced from 1.5% to 1.0% on the annual property tax assessed on real property beginning in Fiscal Year 2026. The exemptions will continue to be for: (1) property owned and occupied as a domicile by any person who would qualify for low income housing or low or moderate income senior housing in the City of Holyoke, as defined in Section 2 of the Act; (2) \$100,000 of the value of each taxable parcel of residential real property; and (3) \$100,000 of the value of each taxable parcel of class three, commercial property, and class four, industrial property as defined in section 2A of said chapter 59. A taxpayer receiving a regular property tax abatement or exemption will also receive a pro rata reduction in the surcharge. Any taxpayer seeking a low income or senior exemption shall apply for said exemption annually to the City of Holyoke.

4) PVTA meeting:

The PVTA is holding a meeting on May 22nd at City Hall from 5:30 to 7:00PM. They are seeking feedback on the need for bus stop locations and any changes people are seeking.

5) Concerns & Comments:

Sgt. Bartolomei was thanked for his attendance and responses to the many questions.

It was noted that JB Hunt is frequently on Homestead Ave during restricted hours.

It was reported to Sgt. Bartolomei that car racing has started up again on Bobala Road in Holyoke usually at 1-2AM Saturdays

The meeting ended at 6:30PM

Linda Vacon Ward 5 City Councilor