A meeting of the Council Finance Committee was held in the Council chamber meeting room at City Hall on October 18, 2013 at noon.

PRESENT: Chairman Clauson, members Putaansuu and Childs, Mayor Matthes, Treasurer Allan Martin. Attending Bek Ashby.

The committee addressed a wide range of 2014 budget issues, including those raised at the work study session on October 15. Paving to the Bethel corridor and potential traffic improvements were highlighted as priorities of the Council. It was noted that the city had already embarked on a study of transportation impact fees for 2014 and discussion centered around how that may provide a funding source for street improvements. Parking improvements to Van Zee Park were discussed and considered at $20,000. Salmonberry turn lane on Bethel was raised by Councilman Chang at the work study session. Although there was recognition of need for a turn lane it seems out of reach considering there would be no improvement to street capacity.

Members noted that $200,000 was budgeted for sewer connection fees and past experience has been greater than that. Mr. Martin said he would review the estimate and report back to the committee.

The executive management assistant program study of the police department, an initiative of the Mayor, was brought up. It was explained that the review should be considered a validation of the police department’s well-managed operation. Not as a negative. Members of the committee were less enthusiastic about leaving the study in the budget.

Mr. Putaansuu raised the question on how much it may cost to clear land acquired as part of the Tremont widening project. Specifically the Miller property. The city’s experience with removing the old house across from City Hall was brought up as an example, and within the same cost range. Generally, it was felt that $40,000 would be an adequate amount to demolish the house. The committee wishes to seek clarification from the public works director on what it might cost to clear the property and demolish the structure. Mr. Martin will look at funding sources including the Street fund, and possibly using existing grant authority.

With the recent announcement that AWC would be moving to a self-insured medical program and hope that there would be a savings in 2014, Chairman Clauson asked that the $70,000 budgeted for medical cost increase be returned back to the general fund for budgeting. Mr. Clauson also asked that $600 be added to the trip reduction program for a total of $1000.

Mr. Clauson led a discussion on the use of electronic monitoring devices in lieu of jail time for certain offenders. Members stated that they wished to track the exact cost of the monitors’ versus incarceration cost in order to capture actual savings. Mr. Martin responded that he would check the budget accounting reporting system guidelines to make sure that the information was captured and reported in 2014.
The committee acknowledged the upcoming November 1, 2013 Department Director interviews to be held in the Council members meeting room beginning at 8:30 AM. The meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM.