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THE COMMUNITY NEWS

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WILLOW PARK

Budget hearing sparsely attended

By Randy Keck

The Community News

Only one resident spoke at the first of two public budget hearings held by the City of Willow Park.

City Administrator Bryan Grimes said he put together a budget with a tax rate the same as last year but providing a slightly different proportion of Interest & Sinking (I&S) to Maintenance & Operations (M&O).

Grimes' budget would have an I&S rate of .2449 and an M&O rate of .2918, resulting in a tax rate of .5367, the same as the current year's rate.

Due to growth in property values, the rate would bring in about 3.5 percent more revenue than the current year.

Council member Lea Young, who chaired the meeting, said she would like to see some funding for parks, and recommended taking \$5,000 from the road budget of \$120,000 and dedicating it to parks.

In the ensuing discussion, council member Gary McKaughan reported that he found a \$15,000 error in calculation that would be in the city's favor.

Council members felt that if McKaughan was accurate, a portion of that could go to parks. Council member Greg Runnebaum was opposed to taking any money from roads, but Young repeated her opinion that parks could use a portion of road money, since the road budget would be increased.

Only one resident spoke at the public hearing.

Marcy Galle expressed concern about the amount of debt the city is taking on.

"Since 2015, my Willow Park property taxes have increased 53 percent," she said, adding that "Willow Park has almost doubled our debt service over the last two years."

Galle asked about salaries that were being transferred from the general fund to the water department. Grimes told her that the people whose salaries were being affected spent about half their time dealing with water and sewer issues, that 50 percent of their salaries were being transferred to the water department.

When she finished speaking, Galle, realizing she was the only speaker at the hearing, concluded, "am I the only speaker? Well, that's too bad."

VOLUNTEERS?

The city of Willow Park is looking for residents who are interested in serving on any of the local boards and commissions. Anyone who is interested should call the city at 817-441-7108.