Mayor Uran called the meeting to order at 6:55 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

Mayor Uran asked for a roll call of the Members. The call of the roll was as follows:

Members Present: Chad Jeffries, Dawn Stokes, Carol Drasga, Andrew Kyres, Laura Sauerman, Zack Bryan and Council President Scott Evorik.

Absent: None

Also present were City Attorney David Nicholls (Zoom), First Assistant City Attorney Alex Kutanozski, Council Attorney Pat Schuster, Greg Guerrettaz (Zoom), Clerk-Treasurer Dave Benson, and Chief Deputy Bette Babjak.

INTRODUCTION OF THE 2022 BUDGET

Mayor Uran introduced the 2022 Budget, with Greg Guerrettaz from FSG present via Zoom.

Greg Guerrettaz stated he had been working closely with the Mayor's Office and the Clerk-Treasurer's Office to work through the preliminary details of the 2022 Budget, indicating all seemed to be going to plan and ahead of schedule.

He stated the strongest challenge would be the discussion of wages. In the past, he had seen anywhere from 0-18% wage increases. No approval of wage increase was given last year.

Greg began the discussion leading with the Estimated Changes in Revenue in 2022.

Property Taxes are expected to increase by the Growth Quotient of 4.30%.

Lake County Total Income Tax is expected to decrease by 3.80% in 2022. The City portion is expected to decrease by 2.45% for 2022. These are estimates only and are subject to change. Final numbers are expected to be out in September.

Payroll increase was not granted in the 2021 budget because the entirety of the State of Indiana expected a possible 20% decrease in income taxes.

MVH revenue is expected to return to pre-pandemic levels and increase by 10-15% in 2022.
Park Revenue will need to be carefully reviewed for the remainder of the 2021 and 2022 years. Greg expressed that he hoped to implement a budget to actual Park Revenue Comparison in 2022. He indicated this would be possible through their new revenue system, New World.

Other Revenues appear to be stable for 2022.

Questions were raised about the projection of MVH Revenue. Discussion ensued, the topic was established, and postponed for later debate.

Mayor Uran requested Greg Guerrettaz touch upon how the Growth Factor was higher than the Growth Quotient.

Greg continued the discussion with the Continuation of Flat Property Tax Rate, focusing on the City Portion.

The City's Assessed Value is expected to increase by 7.01% for pay in 2022.

Property Taxes will be limited to 4.30% Growth.

The City will file an excess levy appeal for The Fairways and Mowry Annexations.

The City could issue a small General Obligation Bond with property tax levy (similar to 2020).

Mayor Uran stated outcome of the Council’s work from 2021 involving this portion of the budget could be seen from the Equipment purchases for departments. He also advised that this year, this portion of the budget could be put toward supporting quality of life for the City of Crown Point, giving value to the Parking Committee and Council, possibly reinvesting in the downtown area.

Mayor Uran invited any discussion from the Council pertaining to this matter and the possibility of enhancing the downtown area. Lengthy discussion occurred on the matter of parking, interest rates, and a parking study.

Member Andrew Kyres made a motion to allow the Council to continue to work with FSG on this process, seconded by Member Dawn Stokes.

Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Mayor Uran said during his discussions with other Mayor’s throughout the State of Indiana regarding Relief Act Dollars, due to what took place in 2020, money had been given back to essential employees.

Mayor Uran requested that Greg Guerrettaz touch on the subject.

Mr. Guerrettaz stated this was called the Premium Pay Act 603.

We look at two things; first, that these payments are given to essential employees, not elected officials.

Second, this may require a legal or written opinion/certification that employees worked from the office and were exposed to the public much of the time.

If an employee received this Premium Pay and could not prove that they were exposed to the public while working for the City from a public office or out in the
community, i.e. not from home, the employee would be audited and the money may have to be paid back.

Premium Pay could be subject to all tax withholdings, excluding insurance. Amounts have averaged in the range of about $2,500.00 to $3,500.00 in some communities.

Mayor Uran stated he felt the entire city was "all hands-on deck" during most of the pandemic, including Police, Fire, Public Works, IT, etc. He suggested instituting Premium Pay to all full-time City Employees for 2020.

Mayor Uran stated City Employees were at risk, dealing with the public each day, to ensure no interruption of service on behalf of the City. Employees did not have the choice to stay home. Our Employees came to work every day, not knowing what the situation would be.

He stated a Resolution may be proposed at the Council meeting in September regarding this matter once the Council has had the chance to look over this matter further. This Resolution, along with minutes from this meeting would then become the Audit Trail for these dispersed dollars.

Mayor Uran then led into discussion of Changes to the 2022 Budget. Crown Point has one of the lowest tax rates in any city or municipality in Lake and Porter County by 2½ times. Crown Point's population is slightly over 34,000, with a 24% growth factor, and one of the lowest work forces per capita for this size city.

The Budget this year has been calculated with across the board 6 % raises for all full-time employees, elected officials, EMA Director, and Deputy EMA Directors.

Additional staffing has also been figured into the budget, even in anticipation of any uncertainty with COVID-18.

Each department has been frugal with spending dollars, enabling additional reserves to build up in accounts across the board. This then allows the City of Crown Point to reinvest in itself. Financially, the City of Crown Point is strong, which creates another reason people choose to live here.

Greg Guerrettaz stated even with raises, it would still be important to watch revenues.

Conversation followed, concerning the percentages of raises, compared to what had been granted in past years. Mayor Uran did remind the Council that no raises had been given in the 2021 Budget. Further debate occurred.

It was recognized by the whole of the Council that full-time employees from each department had worked diligently throughout the pandemic and deserved a pay raise as acknowledgment.

Mayor Uran suggested that some Department Heads could initially grant a portion of the pay raise to their employees, and then fund the remainder throughout the year alongside quarterly reviews as they saw fit.

Structure of quarterly reviews and possible raises were discussed in further detail by the Council.
Concern was raised considering the amount of the pay increase and possible repetition in later years. Mayor Uran stated that would not be the case with 2020 being an unprecedented year and the Budget of 2021 being so unpredictable.

Pertaining to the subject of additional pay to the Board of Works Members and Commissions for attendance of meetings, Laura Sauerman suggested the Mayor and Clerk-Treasurer forego their pay for the fact that these meetings occur on weekdays during their normal office hours.

Mayor Uran did note that his salary was much lower than those of surrounding municipalities. He related that payment for attendance at these meetings was a supplement to their salaries, much like those in attendance at this Council meeting.

Laura Sauerman mentioned she was happy to see the Cemetery Caretaker, Tom Hawes, receiving a pay increase. She stated he does a wonderful job and deserved the wage increase.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS

Carol Drasga questioned if the City was paying to print the Buck slips for “Teal Hearts of Northwest Indiana”, as requested by the organization. She mentioned this organization was a Non for Profit and wished to know if this would be the standard for any Non for Profit in the future. Clerk Benson stated this was the only organization that requested a Buck Slip since I’ve been in Office.

ADJOURNMENT

Member Chad Jefferies motioned for adjournment, seconded by Member Andrew Kyres.

Motion carried by voice vote.

Meeting adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

SUBMITTED:

Bette J. Galjak
David D. Benson, Clerk-Treasurer
Chief Deputy

APPROVED:

David D.F. Uran, Mayor

**Audio available upon request**