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Aldermen narrowly approve budget that cuts police, fire

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QUINCY — Quincy aldermen voted 8-6 Monday night to approve a nearly \$32 million spending plan for fiscal 2016 that calls for the elimination of four vacant police officer positions and the shuttering of Fire Station 6 at 24th and Cedar.

The budget contains a little more than \$1 million in reductions, with more than \$700,000 coming from the Police and Fire departments. The cuts were sought as the city waits to see whether Gov. Bruce Rauner's proposal to reduce shared revenues is approved by the Legislature.

Fire Chief Joe Henning said Station 6 will close Friday, the first day of the fiscal year.

Police Chief Rob Copley was disappointed but not surprised by the vote.

“It would not be a budget vote if at least one aldermen who said they support public safety voted the opposite of that,” Copley said.



Mayor Kyle Moore said the preemptive reductions is a responsible approach and scoffed at the idea of the city using reserves while waiting for state lawmakers to make a decision.

“A fiscal policy rooted in overspending your revenues and depleting your reserves is a shaky fiscal policy,” Moore said. “Why would we want to deplete our reserves when we don't have the recommended (15 percent) that's best practices for other cities?”

However, speakers told aldermen that public safety personnel should not be reduced.

Detective Adam Gibson said he believes eliminating the police positions puts other officers at risk.

“Many times we have one officer available to respond to any high-priority call that comes in, such as fights in progress, ongoing crimes in progress, alarms and gun calls as they come in,” Gibson said. “One officer responding to these types of call is extremely dangerous.”

Voting for the budget were Aldermen Virgil Goehl, D-1, Jared Holbrook, R-3, Paul Havermale, R-3, Mike Farha, R-4, Tony Sassen, R-4, Mike Rein, R-5, Terri Heinecke, R-7, and Jack Holtschlag, D-7.

Alderman Steve Duesterhaus, D-2, called the reductions premature.

“The cuts don't exist at this time,” Duesterhaus said. “The loss of revenue doesn't exist at this time. Prudent action would say if you want to position your budget for a worse-case scenario, you wouldn't disrupt your workforce and your services that you provide to all the people in the community for something you don't know is going to happen.”



Before passing the budget, aldermen approved an amendment to remove retroactive pay to firefighters in the current fiscal year and costs in the Purchasing Department associated with a retiring employee. A proposal to generate \$500,000 in new revenue for Central Services through \$2.50 yard waste stickers was tabled.

The council also will transfer an additional \$473,014 to Central Services and cut \$26,986 in worker costs. Officials say one supervisor in Central Services will be paid from the sewer fund and another supervisor will be demoted to laborer.

Moore declined to offer specifics on those moves, other than to say the city is making structural changes with management.

“There will be some duties that are reassigned,” he said.

Alderman Dave Bauer, D-2, was disappointed that aldermen were provided the amendment Monday.

“It's tough to vote on something that you just received five minutes before you vote on it,” he said.

Moore said because of Thursday's Finance Committee decision to not pursue yard waste stickers, officials worked over the weekend to put the amendment together.

Outside of cuts already made in the budget, Moore said Police and Fire can fill any additional vacancies and will not be forced to reduce any other spending. The council could readdress restoring some staffing if state cuts don't materialize, he said.

