Group suggests city budget cuts

By CATHERINE LANDRY

ABBEVILLE — Mayor Brady Broussard’s Financial Advisory Committee recommended to city leaders Thursday night that they implement up to $800,000 in cuts in the city’s budget.

The committee met with the mayor and city council Thursday night to present a report on the city’s financial condition and also to make recommendations on how the city can stay financially sound.

The 8-member citizens’ committee, appointed by the mayor in October, is comprised of members Albert Boudreau, City Auditor Ellis Bordelon, Bob Broussard, Donald Chauvin, Aurelie Hebert, Louis Hebert, Lorraine LeBlanc, and Phil Sellers.

Sellers, committee chairman, told the few in attendance that the committee could only make recommendations to the mayor and council.

"We are not here to tell you people what to do," Sellers said. "This is not a fault-finding committee. We have the full realization that the council will make the final decisions about these matters."

Sellers went on to say that the urgency of the city’s financial condition was utmost in the committee members’ minds.

"The time has come where decisions need to be made about the situation in the community," said Sellers. "If some changes are not made in the near future, the city could be in financial trouble."

He told the council that the committee is in no way recommending salary cuts or employee layoffs.

According to Sellers, Abbeville could see a projected annual operating deficit of $600,000 for both 1986 and 1987.

"With the way things are going now, the city could have a quarter of a million dollar loss in the general operating fund," he said. "The city had to borrow $800,000 and then another $230,000 from the sales tax fund. If nothing is done about this now, we'll be back at the bank next year borrowing more money.

Sellers told the council that he was aware of cash flow problems the city was facing at this time.

"I know that sometimes checks have to be held for payment until there is enough money for them to be covered," Sellers said.

At this time he presented the committee’s list of options designed to reduce the projected deficit and to make allowances for the repayment of loans made to the general and utility funds from the dedicated sales tax fund.

He added that it was not necessary to implement each of the options, however some combination of the proposals would be necessary to achieve $800,000 of minimum annual cuts required.

"We chose the figure of $800,000 because we thought this would put the city in a good financial condition," Sellers said.

The recommended options are: cycle billing on utility bills, a projected savings of $50,000; the elimination of liability insurance through a carrier, a projected savings of $250,000; departmental cuts of either 5 or 10 percent, a projected savings of $250,000-$500,000; and the correction of errors in electrical charges, a projected savings of $250,000.

Other options to consider were also listed but Sellers stressed the importance of the major four.