

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY, MARCH 8TH, 2021

beginning at 6:40 P.M.

FINANCE PRESENT: Chair Stewart, Tollett, Jessie, Davis, Baird

OTHER COUNCIL PRESENT: Callahan, Keys, Cerra, Mitchell, Oswald, Simmons

OTHERS PRESENT: Law Dir Deery, Asst Law Dir Breunig, Mayor Whitfield, Safety Service Dir Brubaker, Finance Dir Pileski, Asst Finance Dir Farrell, Engineer Schneider, Chief Whitely, Chief Mack, Parks Dir Reardon, Building Official Farkas, Water Supt. Jacob, Public Works Supt. Conner, Asst Dir Calvert, Asst Dir Flanders

1. Approval of the Regular Finance Meeting Minutes ~ February 22nd, 2021

Mr. Tollett moved and seconded by Mrs. Davis to approve the said Meeting Minutes.

2. The matter of inactive/delinquent EPU Accounts to be certified to Lorain County Auditor's Office. (Standing Referral)

REFERRED BY: Public Works Supervisor Conner

Supt. Conner said this is a list of inactive and delinquent accounts that have been approved by the EPU Resolution Board. The total amount of these accounts equals \$22,009.85.

Mr. Tollett moved and Mr. Baird seconded to recommend a resolution to authorize the 'said' list of accounts to be certified to the Lorain County Auditor.

MOTION MADE COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

3. The matter of an appointment of an Income Tax Board of Review as set forth in Elyria Codified Ordinance 192.21.

REFERRED BY: Assistant Finance Director Farrell

Mr. Farrell said the Finance Office received an request from a resident whose taxes were withheld in error back from 2010. Per the tax ordinance only allows for Finance Dir and Tax Authority to refund three prior years. The next step for this resident will be to refer it to the Board of Tax Review.

What he's asking is for the Mayor and Council to appoint that Board.

Dir Deery said this is a 3-person Board; two appointments come from council and one comes from the Mayor.

Mrs. Davis moved and Mr. Tollett seconded to recommend an ordinance to authorize the 'said' Income Tax Review Board.

MOTION MADE COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

4. The matter of codifying the existing Employee Hospitalization Plan Committee.

REFERRED BY: Assistant Safety Service Director Feuerstein

Dir Feuerstein said that his office has been going thru some old policies and procedures for the City. This hospitalization plan committee is one of that has come up, not being able to point to procedures and how it's conducted and who's appointed. So, those matters need to be established and when employees come and go there is always a point to refer to and to make sure to follow the goals and rules that are outlined in the ordinance.

Dir Deery said this committee has existed for sometime, there are references to it in our ordinances, but not any legislation as to who sits on the committee and what is actually addressed by the committee. Therefore this is a housekeeping measure.

Mrs. Davis moved and Mr. Tollett seconded to recommend an ordinance to authorize the codification of the 'said' committee.

MOTION MADE

COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

5. The matter of a second contract extension between Elyria and North Ridgeville.

REFERRED BY: Assistant Safety Service Director Feuerstein

Dir Feuerstein said that Council passed a first extension a few months ago and after that they had another meeting with N. Ridgeville and we are currently working thru a modeling system of our model and their model to determine how best to provide the required pressure for the system as well as a few other items on there system and making sure that we can continue working with them.

This contract extension will allow us to work through August. And will possible be bringing a new contract after that and will be brought to Council at that time.

Mr. Tollett asked what the time frame for this extension?

Mr. Feuerstein said it will be thru August 31st which give enough time to establish those troubleshooting items. The Center Ridge construction project has been part of what has brought the troubleshooting issues including water pressure issues.

Mr. Tollett moved and Mrs. Davis seconded to recommend an ordinance to authorize the 2nd extension to the water contract with North Ridgeville.

MOTION MADE

COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

6. The matter of entering into a contract with Evoqua Water Technologies for a 'Traveling Water Screen' at the Water Pumping Plant.

REFERRED BY: Water Plant Superintendent Jacob

Superintendent Jacob explained what the ' Water Screen' is. There are two pipes; a 42" and a 24" to bring water into the plant. The water goes into two giant raw water wells. And the raw water traveling screen sits 20 feet down on the bottom of the well and goes up four feet and there is screening on it which continuously rotates. That screens any debris out of the water before it hits our pumps to pump it into the plant.

The screen in question is around 50 years old. It's been maintained over the years.

A new screen was installed in the second well a few years ago. Evoqua comes out to inspect these screens every year. When they came out last year they reported that this screen needs major repairs. He said they want to be proactive to get everything repaired before it actually breaks.

Evoqua will come out in the fall to do the work. It's a four to five day, 10 to 12 hour day job. Evoqua brings divers to do the underwater part.

Mr. Oswald asked what they do with the old one after they pull it out, do they keep it in case their would be an emergency?

Mr. Jacob said they're not installing a new one, they are just repairing the current one.

The one that was replaced a few years ago was 80 years old and fell apart and the company scraped it out.

Mr. Tollett asked if this will effect services to the City residents?

Mr. Jacob said no, because they still have the other one in service.

Mr. Tollett moved and Mrs. Davis seconded to recommend an ordinance to authorize the Mayor to enter into a contract for the 'said' project for the Water Pumping Plant.

MOTION MADE

COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

7. The matter of a request to apply for a Recreational Trails Program Grant at West Park which was part of the Parks Master Plan.

REFERRED BY: Assistant Safety Service Director Flanders

Asst Dir Flanders said they are seeking to apply for the West Park Trail thru the Ohio Dept. Of Natural Resources Recreational Trail Program. We've already applied for a Grant in 2020 and are hoping to maximize dollars to see if other opportunities may be appropriate for this endeavor. She said there is a document with a map of the proposed trail and the phases of the project.

This grant has a 20 percent minimum match requirement of the total estimated cost. The total cost of that portion of the project will be about \$203,000. The City's match will be about \$53,289.00. We are eager to see that West Park Trail funded.

Dir Deery said she recommends this to pass on an emergency.

The motion concurs with Mr. Baird and Mr. Tollett.

Mrs. Mitchell said she is very excited to see a trail going in at West Park. She had a suggestion of having benches along the trail. She would be willing to pay for a bench in the memory of her late husband.

Mr. Baird moved and Mr. Tollett seconded to recommend an ordinance to authorize the Mayor to apply for 'said' grant thru the Ohio Dept. Of Natural Resources.

MOTION MADE

COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

8. The matter of the 2021 Permanent Appropriations. [Budget]

REFERRED BY: Finance Directors Pileski and Farrell

The matter of the 2021 budget began with Dir Pileski speaking. He said he gave his presentation at the last Finance Committee Meeting. Since then there are a few changes.

1.) Issue 6 Fund - an agreement for fencing around the EPD Parking Lot and that money was appropriated last year but had never got the project completed. They realized it was not included in the capital list for issue six so we need to add \$120,077 to capital outlay of that fund for the fencing.

2.) General Fund Parks & Rec Dept. the Mayor is requesting an additional \$9,000 to be added to the 1099 services contract line item.

3.) In the General Fund - Summer Camps, the Mayor requested a \$12,000 increase to the hourly part-time account and \$1,974 in the related fringe benefits accounts for additional part-time help in the summer camp department of general fund programs.

4.) After making those changes we had to lower the misc. general government amount in the General Fund by \$18,474 to get the General Fund balance equal to the amount available to appropriate. Those are the changes since his previous presentation.

Mayor Whitfield explained his requests. He gave an overview of his requests. He began by saying a part of his job as mayor, is he's been chartered to present a budget and he's fortunate to be able to work with John and Ted to make sure this is correct and balanced and he thanked them. He said you'll see the capacity building economic development and quality of life. It calls for increasing staff capacity to meet the growing needs in the City and investing in the residents, downtown, Midway Mall area, seniors, youth and City operations.

In addition to reevaluating our Zoning, we also need to re-evaluate our organizational structure to make sure we're increasing communication and collaboration within the City and also maximize the utilization of technology.

The Building Department recently went thru a process similar to this, we're part of the Harvard Initiative. They recently evaluated how our operations work and came up with ways to streamline the work and we want to continue to do that as we grow and also make sure we're hiring appropriate staff to meet the need. We're looking at a zoning administrator to improve our zoning process as well as our overall program.

Once the budget is approved, they'll be posting positions over the next month. We will be putting on a job fair to attract top candidates for the open positions, both seasonal and full time.

We also have room in the budget for housing and residential inspectors and code enforcement inspectors. They will also post another IT position as we're relying more on technology. We also have in the budget an HR position as we continue to try to meet those needs.

Also in the budget there is Economic Development, as the TIFF work and other work that has been approved and needs to be done throughout the City, including downtown and Midway Mall.

He would also like to see some sort of workforce development initiative as folks are looking for work. He's thankful for Council for passing the Skill City Initiative which will be rolling out as well.

Finally as he presented in the State-Of-The-City address, he talked about the EV Life Project which he hopes will be an economic driver as we improve the quality of life here in the City.

We heard loud and clear from the business community that we need to increase and promote the quality of life opportunities not only for employees but for their families.

The funding requests in the Parks is for the 2019 staff level. We're trying to rebuild the department smart and sustainable while being safe. We want the programs to be diverse and inclusive beyond sports. We're planning for 22 program offerings. They're hoping to expand to add a lot more new programs which is why they are asking for the increase in summer camps.

We received a \$10,000 grant from Nordson for summer camps. The reason for the increase in the 1099 is so they can offer more adult-based classes within the rec programs.

The budget also calls for a full season of swimming, summer camps and ice rink. The goal is to utilize numbers from prior years and still try to expand on the programming. They want to do things smarter as well as utilizing community partners.

Lastly the South Park trail is being completed and the West Park trail will be next. In case we don't get these grants for that project, we would still be able to move forward with that.

Next is a mobile movie screen so they can show movies in the park.

Also, the North Park splash pad is on the list. The reason they are considering a splash pad at North Park is because the pool is in poor condition and may only be able to be used for another year or two.

And it's been recommended that the City look into a larger aquatic centralized pool and aquatic center and he want every neighborhood to still have access to some kind of pool or splash pad.

Lastly, they heard that the City wants a dog park which is planned at Hilltop Park. Those are the highlights.

Mr. Tollett thanked the Mayor and said the presentation that he gave at the college was outstanding. He wants to reach out with an olive branch. He told the Mayor that he came across in his response, a little too gruff. Parks are near and dear to everyone. Question is, at North, we have a great pool and he doesn't understand the need for the splash pad.

The Mayor said that if they have to close the pool at North Park they would already have the splash pad so that the North Siders would at least have some kind of water facility and there won't be a gap in service. In other words, to meet a current need while planning for the future.

The current pool at North Rec may be requiring a major overhaul in next year or two. In looking at a centralized pool/aquatic center and North Park isn't centralized.

Mr. Tollett asked if there any detailed plans on the centralized aquatic center?

Mayor Whitfield said the goal was to look at where does it make sense for it to be located. The mall is being considered and potentially to have a partnership with a healthcare facility such as University Hospital or Cleveland Clinic.

Mr. Tollett asked if the North pool in good enough shape for another year or two and therefore tabling the splash pad for now, on this years budget? He thinks from a financial standpoint to maybe table the idea of the splash pad for now until they see how the pool fair this upcoming season. And to see what comes with the mall property, stimulus monies.

Mayor said he offers his understanding. And he asked Dir Reardon to speak on the details of the North Rec pool.

Dir Reardon said from her understanding the pool was turned on last year, though it was not actually used or opened to the public. So, it had been working properly and mechanically. This is an old pool but yes, it will work. There may be a few mechanical things may need to be fixed. She said that in 2018 they put in about \$25,000 to \$30,000 from Issue 6 dollars for cosmetic upgrades. It's been a number of years since any significant money has been put into it to upgrade it mechanically.

Mr. Tollett asked what the location of the proposed splash pad would be? And if it's in the Little League property, would we have to break a contract?

Dir Reardon said those are ongoing discussions that they've had. They've talked about a few different locations, nothing was decided, but the Little League area would make sense since there are restroom already there and the lack of Little League utilizing the facility.

Mr. Cerra said that Little League North is no longer in effect. It used to be they were chartered separately, and now it's Elyria Little League so that contract may not be in effect.

Law Dir Deery said they have looked at the lease and there are some concerns. If the City would move forward they would have to reach out to Little League and Little League Elyria did absorb all of the leagues.

Ms. Reardon added that a splash pad would not take up all 4 fields. The discussion was to take one of those fields, the one closest to the pavilion and rest rooms.

Mrs. Mitchell concurs with Mr. Tollett that we table the splash pad for now. She feels the aquatic center is an awesome idea and the mall is a great location. She feels spending money on a splash pad and not knowing details of the aquatic center and even if the residents will go for it is putting the cart before the horse.

Mrs. Davis asked about the connection of an aquatic center in partnership with a health center?

Mayor Whitfield said the way these work is when you have that healthcare as a part of it, which helps offset the cost because the healthcare will use it for occupational therapy for their patients. An example is the Healthplex in Amherst where Mercy Health is occupying the top floor using the facility for their patients and the bottom floor is operated by the Metro Parks. In other communities it could be partnered with the YMCA. We are just in those discussions at this time.

Mr. Tollett asked if they've explored partnership with the high schools for swim teams?

The Mayor said yes, they will welcome those schools that are looking for a location and that can be a part of the model.

Mr. Cerra said going back to the pools at North, being as old as they are, he feels it's a good idea to put the splash pad there now so that in a year or two, and the pool is not repairable, what will the kids in the 7th ward going to do if there is not splash pad and no pool?

The Mayor said that is the logic behind it.

Chair Stewart asked about the inspectors for the Building Dept.

Mayor Whitfield said we need to look at where things are structured and where things come out of and what office needs them.

Dir Brubaker said the Building Dept and Community Development already work very closely. They have an inspector who is in the process of studying to take his residential inspector test. We have 4 new subdivisions that are ready to start and we will add that additional help in residential inspection part of that. So, it's been put into the budget for that individual once he passes his test and then his current position, which is code enforcement, will go up for bid thru the bidding process.

There were 3 code enforcement employees who have been partially paid out of CDBG Block Grant Funds and the General Fund. When the pandemic began some folks were moved out of those positions. The idea is to have one official code enforcement officer and not utilize the CDBG money or the General Fund money and instead use it for additional help with the residential and commercial side.

The inspectors that we have in the Building Dept. have the ability and can and will do code enforcement and we have the capacity to meet the needs of the community.

Mr. Oswald asked if they pay for their own schooling and do they get rewarded after they pass since that makes them more valuable?

Mr. Brubaker said the inspectors have the ability, on City time to study for their tests. If they have to travel to take a class, we do pay for that. There are some bonuses and or stipends within the collective bargaining agreement for certain licenses.

Mrs. Mitchell asked if the Mayor can share the Parks Master Plan?

Mayor Whitfield said that part of that plan was shared during the recent Town Hall Meeting. He said he can share that power point presentation. Some of the things that stood out were the aquatic center, dog park, aquatics in general, communication and promotions. That's one of the reasons why they asked for an increase in the budget in terms of operating and maintenance on the Issue 6 Economic Development so we can do better at getting information out there to the residents.

Mrs. Mitchell disagrees with Mr. Cerra about doing the splash pad now, she feels we should wait on that and table that.

Mr. Baird said we could have a swimming dog park.... ha! ha!

Chair Stewart thanked all the departments for putting their budgets together and the Finance Dir's Ted and John.

Chair Stewart said the budget in itself is very fluid as we know and all the departments worked hard to put their budgets together along with the Finance Dir and his assistant, Mr. Farrell and their team. The budget is fluid and it changes all the time based on income tax revenues. He agrees with more discussion on the splash pad and Dir Reardon can supply with recent comments and ideas and the direction moving forward. Mr. Stewart asked if the Parks Programs are out yet?

Mayor Whitfield said the information is out there, there's a lot of noise in the ecosystem, some is dealing with day to day news of what's coming up and some is about what we're putting out as a city, we're trying to push what we have. He feels we have a solid plan on getting the communications together, the idea of active branding. In regards to the splash pad piece, that decision doesn't need to be made right now, we would have to come back for approval.

Mr. Tollett said looked at the parking lot of the EPD to get an idea of the fencing need there. He noticed the parking lot is in poor condition. While he sat there he noticed folks walking thru the parking lot. So there is little separation between the public and the parking lot, the fence is absolutely needed.

Mr. Tollett's next question was, is the IT person we're talking about hiring going to administrate that body cam program, is that part of that need?

Mayor said the he and Chief Whitely have been in conversations regarding the body cam program. They agree that this year they want to focus on training and with a plan to focus on a body cam program roll out for next year. With that program, communications will be involved in that as well as IT. We have some pretty strong tech folks with the City and this new person would help relieve the 'Koury's of the world' so they can focus on things like this.

Chief Whitely said that the fencing is very much needed. Some time ago a number of tires on cruisers were cut. While pedestrians are walking in the area and cars are backing out, even with signs posted and their could be liability.

The parking lot is overdue for repair and Chief is thankful that will be getting done.

Mr. Oswald said that he appreciated being able to hold this meeting in person here in chambers and that there was some great conversation tonight and everyone was working together.

Chair Stewart said thru Mr. Pileski and Mr. Farrell there has been conversations in regards to the budget exhibit that was presented this evening as far as with the splash pad and those dollars that were dedicated for that project?

Mr. Pileski said that if the committee and council decides to not go forward with that project at this time he would remove it from the appropriations and remove it from the Capital List. The money that has been earmarked for that would go unappropriated and if revenues come in as anticipated then the money will be there for whatever they decide to do with it.

Chair Stewart asked for a motion to remove that line item from the appropriations at this particular time.

Motion made by Mr. Tollett, second by Mrs. Davis to remove the matter of the North Rec splash pad from the appropriations.

All in favor? Aye = majority, Nay = one (Mr. Cerra)

MOTION CARRIED

Chair Stewart asked for a motion on the budget to approve as presented?

Mrs. Tollett moved and Mr. Baird seconded to recommend an ordinance to authorize the 2021 Permanent Appropriations of the City of Elyria.

MOTION MADE

COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

Mrs. Davis moved and second by Mr. Baird to adjourn this evening's Finance Meeting at 7:40 P.M.

MOTION CARRIED

Respectfully submitted by,

Colleen Rosado, Council Clerk Secretary

(Committee Meeting was attended by Secretary Rosado ~ Meeting Minutes were transcribed by Secretary Rosado).