

The Utilities, Safety & Environment Committee

held a meeting on

Wednesday, June 21st, 2022 beginning at 6:00 P.M.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Committee Chair Mitchell, Members; Davis, Oswald, Simmons

OTHERS PRESENT: Law Director Deery, Engineer McKillips, Parks Dir Reardon and Councilman Cerra

1. Approval of the June 1st, 2022 Utilities Committee Meeting Minutes.

Mrs. Simmons moved and second by Mr. Oswald to approved the above mentioned Committee Meeting Minutes.

2. The matter of authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with Black & Veatch Management Consulting, LLC.

Referred By: Engineer McKillips *(This will also go to Finance on June 27th)*

Engineer McKillips said Black & Veatch has worked with the City on Water & Sewer rates since 2017. They want to continue working with them. There were rate increases for water and sewer at the beginning of this year and will increase for 2023 and 2024. They would like to enter into a contract for Black & Veatch to do a comprehensive water and sewer utility rate study to update our existing rate model and provide additional recommendations. If appropriate for revenue increases or decreases and that's one of the things that were discussed before they passed the 3-year increases is if during the next couple years and if there's an opportunity to potentially to either decrease or eliminate the increases that are on the books. This contract would bring Black & Veatch back to the City to review the information, mostly on the water side and review on the sewer side. Due negotiations with the EPA they had been concentrating the rates and the rate study on the sewer side. They will look at other programs that the City may want to implement that may be able to assist residents that may not have the ability to consume the increases as they increase over the next several years.

Chair Mitchell asked how much the contract is for?

Engineer McKillips said it's for \$71,840 and it's split between water and sewer and more heavily on the water side. Engineer asked for suspension of rules.

Mr. Oswald asked if necessary to have a consultant? Can't we do this on our own?

Engineer McKillips explained that this company takes our billing data from the department and taking the information to determine how our rates should be formulated. Three or four years ago a service fee was added as opposed to a minimum water usage. With that process they started to move bulk of large rate pairs equally. When they did the minimum, it's not equal across the board when you have large industries paying a certain rate with a minimum and the homeowners who use minimal water usage. They started the process of rolling in to the service charge and converting the service charge to more or less take care of the hard costs, such as labor, materials, etc. with the 3-year rate increase that was passed, the service charge has remained the same. The rates itself are increasing but not the service charge. Now they need to look into what will be done with the rates beyond 2024. The consulting firm will review every little aspect of the billing information, debt service, current rates, projected rates, population growth. The City doesn't have the manpower to do this in-house.

Mrs. Davis said she thought the new meters would help find out this these things and help stabilize the rates because companies weren't paying their fair share versus homeowners. She asked if the amount of \$113,000 is what we paid previously?

Law Dir Deery said that was a previous amendment when Black & Veatch was working on the matter with the EPA case. This agreement will be a cost of \$72,000. She added that the new meters are taking a more accurate inventory of the water that's used. Black & Veatch is good at the numbers and being able to manipulate the numbers; customers, amount of water used and if there is an unforeseen project at the water pumping plant that could cost x amount of dollars and how much would our rates have to go up in order to cover that. They figure out what the numbers need to look like and they can change things and bring those scenarios back to council.

Mr. Oswald moved and Mrs. Davis seconded to recommend an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into 'said' agreement.

MOTION MADE

COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

3. The matter of authorizing the Mayor to apply for and accept, if offered, an ODNR Nature Works Grant.

Referred By: Parks Dir Reardon (This will also go to Finance on June 27th)

Dir Reardon said they applied for this grant last year and the department was awarded it for the playground project at North Park. This is the next cycle for this grant. For this year's grant they would like to apply for a small additional parking lot at Washington Village Park, off of Fowl Road, which would include connecting walkways, a basketball court and connecting to the playground which is a short distance to that existing parking lot. She met last week and there was a discussion about the walkway. They will put in an alternate to the paving bid that's already out. That would not effect this. If they are able to do that additional parking lot this year, they would design that project around that. The engineering department came up with a great idea to add a few parking spaces and fix the drainage and add connecting and they thought this would be a good fit. This is a matching grant. This year there is \$33,388 available for Lorain County thru the Nature Works. Based on the requirements of the grant you only have to match 25 percent but due to the estimate of the project we would contribute \$37,000 which she would budget for next year's Issue 6 money. They think it would be a good fit for all the accessibility that they need to get to the new neighborhood.

Chair Mitchell said for those who don't know where Washington Park is, it's off of Fowl Road. There is a brand new development called Fairfield Estates, off Fowl Road. Washington Park got new playground equipment but basically, it's a field and there is no way for the kids to get from the development to the park other than to walk all around. So they've been asking for a sidewalk from the development to the park. It will be great for the neighborhood.

Dir Reardon asked for it to pass as emergency, the grant is due July 15th.

Mrs. Davis moved and Mr. Oswald seconded to recommend an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to apply for and accept the 'said' grant.

MOTION MADE

COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

Chair Mitchell asked for a motion to adjourn The Utilities Safety & Environment Committee:

Mr. Oswald moved, seconded by Mrs. Simmons to Adjourn the Meeting at 6:20 P.M.

MOTION CARRIED

Respectfully Submitted by,

Colleen Rosado, Secretary

/CMR