

# **The Utilities, Safety & Environment Committee**

held a meeting on **Wednesday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023** at 6:00 P.M.

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chair Mitchell, Davis, Simmons, Corbin

**ABSENT:** Oswald

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Councilman Cerra and Lipian, Law Director Breunig, Safety Service Dir Lundy, Asst Dir Williams, Mayor Whitfield, Police Chief Pelko, Engineer McKillips, WWPC Supt Korzan, Parks Dir Reardon

*Note: the sound system in Council Chambers went down, and a temporary system is in place, though, the audio recording of this meeting is not very clear and the meeting has been transcribed as best as possible.*

## **1. Approval of the Utilities Committee Meeting Minutes ~ September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023.**

Mrs. Simmons moved, seconded by Mrs. Davis to approve the 'said' meeting minutes.

## **2. The matter of codification of Ohio Revised Code for seatbelts; occupants restraining ordinance 4513.263 to ECO Chapter 337.**

Referred By: Elyria Police Chief Pelko (Tabled from 9/11/2023)

Chief Pelko said that he has already spoken to the Law Dir's Office and he is asking if this matter can be rescinded. Some of the issue was for some of the funding to go to the City but it's already written into legislation that the funds collected on this goes directly to the State and not to the City.

Law Dir Breunig said that they will need to ask for a motion from the committee to rescind this matter, so it doesn't look like we're not preparing legislation that was recommended by the committee.

***Chair Mitchell said as per Law Dir Breunig, she asked for a motion to rescind the committee report.***

**Mrs. Davis moved, Mrs. Simmons second to authorize to rescind the previous committee report for the Occupant Restraining Device ordinance.**

**MOTION CARRIED COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN**

## **3. The matter of establishing an Animal Control Officer position for the EPD.**

Referred By: Ward 1 Council Member Lipian

*Councilman Lipian asked that this matter be moved to 'pending' items on the Finance Committee Agenda.*

## **4. The matter of discussion of shootings and resident's safety in the City.**

Referred By: Ward 1 Council Member Lipian

Mr. Lipian said that he thinks it's a timely occasion to have this conversation because October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, National Crime Prevention Month and also National Drug Prevention Month. It's also timely because there was a recent shooting at the property at Cornell Avenue and another shooting at Harvard Avenue.

Ward One feels these incidents very profoundly as well as the whole City. He wanted this conversation about finding a solution. It's not about finding fault, but we are all responsible for finding a solution to it. He doesn't feel that crime is outrageously preponderant in Elyria, but it's creeping up on us.

Some thoughts were to encourage more leaders in the City. When he had a meeting with residents, he heard a lot of folks say that they want to get involved in a Block Watch and be a part of it. Also, there are churches that want to take an active role in crime prevention. There are a lot of disparate elements that want to be involved in this and there's an opportunity to help the Police Dept coordinate these attempts to have more leaders raise up and revitalize in our City. One way we could do it, is by partnering with the National Crime Prevention Council. They've seen success in Seattle and Spartanburg assisting communities with training events and helping coordinate an effective response from a leadership and community perspective to violence prevention. There will be an event in Eastern Heights on Monday, Oct 23<sup>rd</sup> to canvass the neighborhood and drop off flyers about tip 411, about the National Crime Prevention Council and how to request crime kits, registering security cameras. He does not want this to be a Ward 1 initiative he would love to see other wards do the same. An article which was placed on everyone tables is from News Channel 5 regarding crime in Garfield Heights which dropped more than 33% after a new police unit was formed. It's worth looking at this as a case study and how to reduce violent crime. Garfield Heights created an effective violent crime unit in the Police Department and they were able to reduce their crime. That is a long-term solution. But we can explore the short-term realistic solutions that were just mentioned.

Chief Pelko said we're all about making the community safer and those are some great ideas. They are willing to work with anyone to try to lower violent crime. One issue is he needs officers to do that. He has 79 officers right now; 1 in the academy, 1 out on an injury. They have problems hiring officers. The starting salary is \$60,563. There are other communities that we're competing with; North Royalton starts at \$69,000 to \$84,000 based on experience, Twinsburg is paying \$65,000 to \$76,000 to start, Seven Hills is paying \$69,000 to \$84,000, Brook Park is paying \$73,000 to \$81,000, Parma Heights, after 5 years \$82,000, Westlake starts at \$78,000 and he has a Sergeant leaving to go to Westlake. Elyria is competing with these other agencies. We just gave a lateral test and we're hiring two officers from Newberg Heights. That is one of our problems. Another issue is the department needs more license plate reader cameras or other cameras throughout the city to help solve some of these crime issues.

They use a company called Genitech is the company that provides the cameras and the cost for tow cameras is around \$15,000. Currently there are 24 to 28 of those cameras set up in the city right now and we could use another 24 to 28 and have them strategically placed throughout the City.

Tip 411 is a huge way that residents can notify the police anonymously of crimes happening in their area. There is also a narcotics tip line if you have a drug house in the area or see drug activity. He said he is open to any comments, concerns or questions.

Chair Mitchell said they had a great discussion after the last council meeting, with residents and members of council and one issue that was brought up is the pay, but we can't even get anyone who wants to be a police officer.

Chief Pelko said that's across the board with many departments, but some are not having these issues. Westlake Dept and Lorain are not having any trouble getting new hires and they are fully staffed. Those are the departments that are paying a better salary getting those officers. The Elyria Dept handles 35,000 calls a year and it's a great group of people that work hard.

Those officers might get burn-out or might go somewhere else where the pay is better and that's a problem. If we could increase the salary that would be a starting point to getting and keeping officers.

Mayor Whitfield thanked Mr. Lipian for bring this topic up and thanks to the committee for this discussion. Elyria is not alone in dealing with this issue. He's proud of us that we're having conversations on how to address it. He asked Chief Pelko about recruitment and he spoke with integrity of the department. We get applicants and he asked the Chief to speak about the process.

Chief Pelko said they are currently in the process of an entry level test. There were about 40 applicants. There is a physical standard that they have to pass in order to make it to the next stage, and only some people pass that. The next step in the written test. There were 25 who took that test and now it's down to 20 because there were 5 who didn't pass that. So, those 20 people are at the next step, where the department's recruiting officer will look into their backgrounds and some may get disqualified at that time. Then the interview process will start. They look for the right person to be a police officer and will fit it. They don't hire anyone that just checks the box.

The recruiting officer is a Sergeant who's in charge of this process. He goes to the job fairs, we reach out to the militaries. They hired Dana Linden who is the social media person to try to promote and market the Department. She does Facebook posts to promote the department to find residents who are active and involved in the community. They are doing everything they can. The Department has high standards and they are held to a higher standard.

Mayor Whitfield said that it's an important thing that people recognize that if the Chief is making sure that we're putting in the right people to help protect our city. Other thing they're looking at is addressing the issue of longevity. So when we recruit when an officer from another city and they have years from that current city and they currently don't get credit for that when we hire them, but, that is something that they want to considering being changed. This year we got those grants and we're doing hiring bonuses and retention bonuses. New hires are receiving a \$5000 bonus. This is to increase recruitment.

As far as the law enforcement side, is investing in technology. We have to look at the environmental conditions that cause crime. Such as poverty, education, home ownership, substance abuse, these things that lead to crime. We need to keep youth engaged with positivity, expanding Parks & Rec activities. Partnering with organizations like the MARS Board and others. Sometime there is a little bit of nimbyism that goes with these services. But those services are needed. Home ownership is important because sometimes there's a correlation to the number of people who are incarcerated who don't have a high school diploma, the correlation between not completing high school and ending up in crime. As we partner with Parks & Rec and as Community Development partners with nonprofits to help the young people stay on the right track to graduate. We have the opportunity to partner with our CDC to encourage more homeownership which increases the pride the people have in the community. Ultimately, we have to partner with parents, often times these are young people who are lacking parental guidance and discipline and to be taught how to handle conflict. That has to be reinstilled back into the community. We need a strong economy with good paying jobs that people can afford to live off one job. We have to help the parents be held more accountable and to service them and help them with raising their children.

Chair Mitchell said when we were raised, people in the neighborhood knew all the kids and who the parents were. If anyone saw a kid doing something wrong, they would tell the parents.

That changed when people had a problem with the 'village' talking to their kids. We need to get back to that, we need that 'village'.

Mr. Lipian said that he agrees with Chair Mitchell. He agrees that we have to get out and know our neighbors. He wants to see the Police Force get the manning that they need and get a violent crime unit and to work with the National Crime Prevention Council to help coordinate this 'village'. We need to get the community behind it. We've had those meetings in Eastern Heights. They are going to do a National Crime Prevention event in Ward 1 this month. We need a robust and multifaceted solution to this problem.

Chair Mitchell said some of the issues with the shooting and crime is because of drugs.

Mayor Whitfield said that we are attempting to use a community violence interruption model that we're partnering with the Urban League and the Health Department to address this from a public health standpoint. Which includes the violence interrupter, when an incident happens, it's more of an intervention. They'll be dispatched to these neighborhoods to talk to the residents and victims. They'll gather information and share it with the Law Enforcement and play roles of mediation. It's not only drugs that is driving it, it's social media as well. This is a new way of trying to address violence. We got a grant to try this out as a pilot program. We're hoping this will help to interrupt when something happens in our city.

Mr. Lipian said though, he's not a member of this committee, he would like to work with Chair Mitchell to coordinate with the Mayor's office to find a set of solutions that we can put into place to address this crime in our community and get this ball rolling; something we can vote on and something we can make happen together.

## **5. The matter of an Ohio Department of Natural Resources Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant.**

Referred By: Parks Director Reardon

*(This matter was passed by Finance on 10/10/2023)*

Director Reardon said the deadline for this grant is November 15<sup>th</sup>. So, this is the same grant, but a different grant cycle of the West Park project. It's administered through ODNR and it's the Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant. They would like to apply for the cycle that is coming up, for the woman's locker room project at North Park. They had asked for \$300,000 in 2023 Issue 6 Parks Budget. The project went out to bid earlier this year and it came back over-budget. They've been going back to get closer to the money that was budgeted. This grant opportunity came up and it's a good fit for this project. They have all the specs and plan that can be submitted with this application. They have support from the hockey club. This is something that is needed and they think this is a great opportunity.

They've had great success with the Land and Water Conservation Fund. This is the same grant that they were awarded for the Splash Pad at West Park. This is a matching grant. Although there is already \$300,000 already appropriated and she had to ask for \$50,000, but will actually need the whole amount of \$700,000 for next year's Issue 6 monies because it is a reimbursement grant. If the grant is awarded, half of that would be given back.

Dir Reardon said nothing needs to be added in this year's 2023 budget but she does something to go with the application that says that the money is available so that they're able to apply for the grant. They won't find out about this grant until spring of 2024. If they're awarded the grant, they won't enter into an agreement until summer of 2024.

Law Dir Breunig said this is a 100% reimbursement grant, which we have to front that money and then get it back at a 50% ratio.

Dir Reardon said they would front all \$700,000 and then we would get half of that back. The amount the City would pay is \$350,000, but all of it would be need to be appropriated.

Dir Breunig said it sounds like at this point we only need to authorize the department to apply for the grant so we don't need to authorize to accept this, because that would imply that we have funds appropriated, so this is just for authorization.

Dir Reardon said that the grant is looking for something that says this entity has given the approval to apply.

**Motion made by Mrs. Davis and second by Mr. Corbin to authorize an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to apply for 'said' grant. Emergency clause is requested due to grant deadline.**

**MOTION CARRIED COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN**

## **6. The matter of a Professional Agreement with Black & Veatch.**

Referred By: Engineer McKillips

*(This matter was passed by Finance on 10/10/2023)*

Engineer McKillips said this is a request for professional services with Black & Veatch for preliminary engineering for the entire scope of the study that was performed, it's full design Engineering Services for the items that are EPA required. A couple of years ago, the City rec'd a grant for a study at the Water Pumping Plant and from that study came a list of projects that need to be done. Some need to be done immediately. One of those things is to look at increasing the capacity of our plant. Through a quality-based selection process and they selected Black & Veatch Corporation.

They will provide services for Phase 1, which includes preliminary engineering for plant improvements as a whole, procurement services for long lead items, equipment which would be long lead times, up to 12 to 18 months. They will also prepare full design for the immediate issues that need to be taken care of as per the request of Ohio EPA.

The contract with Black & Veatch will cost \$527,500. Monies are budgeted in the 2023 water fund. They request this to pass as an emergency so they can get started.

**Motion made by Mrs. Davis and second by Mrs. Simmons to authorize an ordinance to enter into the said professional service agreement, emergency clause is requested.**

**MOTION CARRIED COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN**

## **7. The matter of applying for and accepting a TLCI Grant.**

Referred By: Engineer McKillips

*(This matter was passed by Finance on 10/10/2023)*

Engineer McKillips said the Grant application has already been submitted to NOACA for this TLCI Wayfinding project last Friday. We applied for this 2 years ago, but did not receive it. So, we are now applying for the same project with a few tweaks and trying to gain points for scoring, so that we get part or all of our projects funded. In addition to wayfinding signage they are adding some sidewalk improvements, lighting improvements, bike racks.

Also, being added are share the road signs that will help connect the Lorain County Metro Parks bike paths for connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists in that section of the City. NOACA is aware that this legislation is in process, and they will get the application as soon as it's completed.

Chair Mitchell asked what wayfinding signage means?

Engineer McKillips said its signs directing motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists to different places in the City; Library, Falls, River Walk, City Hall, Hospital, those type of places throughout the City.

**Motion made by Mrs. Simmons and second by Mr. Corbin to authorize an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to apply for and accept the TLCI Grant and Emergency Clause is requested.**

**MOTION CARRIED COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN**

### **8. The matter of a contract for the 2024 Emergency Sanitary & Storm Sewer Repairs.**

Referred By: Engineer McKillips

*(This matter was passed by Finance on 10/10/2023)*

Engineer McKillips said the sewer repair contract is a regular annual or bi-annual contract. She had presented a change order in March to the 2022 contract of \$150,000 that took half of the 2023 budget amount of \$300,000, so that contract can be extended beyond the busy construction season. They've tried bidding the project out during the construction season and it doesn't work very well, trying to get sewers repaired during that time. This is looking toward the contract for next year and they would like it to be \$300,000. A majority of those funds will be used in 2024, possibly some of the funds will be used this year after they bid the project and get it awarded, it will depend on timing.

Law Dir Breunig asked if the funds have been appropriated?

Engineer McKillips said that per Finance Dir Pileski, there were enough funds in that account at this time.

**Motion made by Mrs. Davis and second by Mr. Corbin to authorize an ordinance authorizing the Mayor to advertise for and award a contract for the 'said' Sanitary and Sewer Repairs, Emergency clause requested.**

**MOTION CARRIED COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN**

### **9. The matter of entering into a change order for concrete repairs for Primary Settling Tanks at WWPC Plant.**

Referred By: Engineer McKillips

*(This matter was passed by Finance on 10/10/2023)*

Engineer McKillips said this is a change order for additional funds of \$98,700 for repairs that need to be made at the Waste Water Pollution Control Plant. The primary settling tanks are getting a complete concrete overhaul. The contractor has given a price at the request of the City to do additional work that involves concrete replacement of a floor hatch, waterproofing epoxy injection and additional concrete work.

While the contractor was there on-site doing work on the primary settling tank, there was additional work that was brought up in the area that has to do with the hatch. While they were there, it made sense for them to look at that and the lead time for the hatch door. They will change it out to a different one. The area that this work that has already been completed was needed to be done, but which was not included in the primary settling tank project. Emergency clause is requested. The original contract amount was \$389,300.

**Motion made by Mrs. Simmons and second by Mrs. Davis to authorize an ordinance to authorize the Mayor to enter into the 'said' change order for repairs at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Emergency clause is requested.**  
**MOTION CARRIED COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN**

**10. The matter of amending Ord No 2023-8 for the purchase a 2023 F-250 Truck in place of a F-550 Service Truck for the WWPC Plant, (F-550 trucks are not available).**

Referred By: WWPC Supt. Korzan (This matter was passed by Finance on 9/25/2023)

Supt Korzan said they cannot quote on state bids if they can't place orders for them. And those F-550 trucks are just not available right now. The amount that was previously appropriated will cover this.

**Motion made by Mrs. Davis and second by Mrs. Simmons to authorize an ordinance to amend the previous ordinance for the purchase of a F-250 truck. Emergency clause is requested.**  
**MOTION CARRIED COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN**

**11. The matter of the purchase of a Leaf Vac Truck.**

Referred By: Safety Svc Dir Lundy (This matter was passed by Finance on 9/25/2023)

Asst Dir Williams said the City rec'd a grant for \$100,000. The projected amount for this vehicle is \$125,000. It is for the Sanitation Dept. But because of the delay of the vehicles, by the time we get it, the price has gone up. We have a reimbursement grant for \$100,000. After conversations with Joe Strohsack and looking at these prices, we want to give ourselves some cushion, so that is why the amount is \$145,000.

Mr. Williams said this is everything, the complete system, the truck and the blower. When we do receive the grant money we will receive that in the 2016 half percent income tax fund and the entire purchase cost will come out of that fund, but \$100,000 will go back and reimburse it.

**Motion made by Mrs. Simmons and second by Mr. Corbin to authorize the Mayor to enter into an agreement to purchase the 'said' vehicle.**  
**MOTION CARRIED COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN**

**12. The matter of the purchase of a Dump Truck.**

Referred By: Safety Svc Dir Lundy (This matter was passed by Finance on 9/25/2023)

Asst Dir Williams said that we have already purchased the other two parts of the apparatus and this is the outstanding piece.

The initial price was \$60,000 and the latest quote is \$72,000 and by the time we actually get it, the cost could go up another \$10,000. The appropriated amount, which includes that cushion, is \$80,000.

The leaf vac truck has 3 parts to it; and the other 2 portions were purchased in 2022.

The outstanding component is the actual 'dump-truck' portion. Mr. Strohsack came across this truck, which would have met the need, but the funds hadn't been appropriated and so by the time they got thru the process, the truck was already gone. So, if that opportunity occurs again, they can get it. Also, the ordering process has opened up. they also had to keep asking for extensions on the grant because it was closing. We can now place the order. He asked this to be passed as an emergency.

**Motion made by Mrs. Simmons and second by Mrs. Davis to authorize the Mayor to enter into an agreement to purchase the 'said' vehicle, emergency clause.**

**MOTION CARRIED COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN**

*Chair Mitchell asked for a motion to adjourn.*

**Mrs. Davis moved to adjourn the Utilities, Safety & Environment Committee Meeting and that motion was seconded by Mrs. Simmons.**

**The meeting adjourned at 7:00 P.M.**

**MOTION CARRIED**

*Respectfully Submitted by,*

*Colleen Rosado, Secretary/Administrative Assistant*