

THE FINANCE Committee held a meeting on Monday, February 12th, 2024 beginning at 7:05 P.M

Committee Members Present: Callahan, Stewart, Oswald, Armstrong, Davis, Schneider, Siwierka, Cerra, Lipian
Excused Absence: Tollett and Mitchell

Administration and Department Heads Present: Mayor Brubaker, Safety Service Dir Pyanowski, Finance Dir Pileski, Asst Finance Dir Farrell, Law Dir Deery, Dir Calvert, Asst Dir Strohsack, Public Works Supt Conner, Community Development Dir Scott, HR Dir Yousefi, Building Official Farkas - *on zoom*

1. The matter of Inactive/Delinquent EPU Accounts to be certified to The Lorain County Auditor's Office. *[Standing Referral]*

Referred By: Public Works Supervisor Conner

Supt Conner said this is a list of about two dozen delinquent accounts that were approved at the Utilities Resolution Board on Feb 2nd. The amounts total to \$5,532.20.

Motion made by Mrs. Siwierka and second by Mr. Schneider authorizing a resolution for 'said' list of accounts be certified as liens to the Lorain County Auditor's Office.

MOTION CARRIES COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

2. The matter of Demolition Charges for 144 Irondale St. to be certified to The Lorain County Auditor's Office. *[Standing Referral]*

Referred By: Building Official Farkas

No discussion on this matter.

Motion made by Mrs. Siwierka and second by Mr. Schneider authorizing a resolution for 'said' account to be certified to the Lorain County Auditor's Office.

MOTION CARRIES COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

3. The matter of utilizing ARPA Funds for a \$250,000 Grant for the Elyria Community Partnership for the Senior Housing Development at 615 Foster Ave.

Referred By: Asst Dir Calvert

CD Dir Scott said this is a request for utilizing ARPA Funds in the amount of \$250,000 in the form of a grant to the Elyria Community Partnership for a Senior Housing Development at 615 Foster Ave. This is also in partnership with Pivotal.

Monet Roberts of Elyria Community Partnership began saying that ECP is a local community development organization here in the community. They do events within the community and the focus has been to revitalize downtown.

They also want to contribute to the increased quality of housing in Elyria. They have partnered with Pivotal. They have done research on this company. They want to extend their appreciation for their ability to provide quality. She also wanted everyone to understand that this funding would be flowing through ECP as a requirement for the State Funding.

Ms. Roberts introduced a representative from Pivotal.

Pete Schwiegeraht of Pivotal Housing, address 9100 Centerpoint Drive, Westchester Ohio 45069. He was here a few months ago for the rezoning of the property. They're excited to be partnering with Elyria Community Partnership. They do great things here and they want to further housing and housing opportunities. They did come to see properties in Toledo as part of their research. They build and are able to operate those developments long term. ECP is serious about taking this partnership and with that they're able to have success. They applied for funding through the state, Bond Gap Financing and it helps fund a 4 percent bond development. The State contributed in a substantial resource themselves. The applications require some local funding match. This \$250,000 allows to achieve a funding match to get the score that brings this award.

Phase one will be 46 independent senior living units. They will be built to national Green Building standards. Will have on-site management and community providers. There will be the potential for a future phase. The dollars they are requesting tonight will be used to help fund phase one. It will be plus or minus 15 million in new investment. The building that is there on this site is deteriorated and it will be demolished. Phase one will happen on the north side of the site so construction can occur while they are taking down the old property. These funds will get needed points to bring home these State dollars. They've used ARPA funds in other affordable developments like this. it is a target of what the ARPA dollars were there to do, to help with decent and safe quality housing to the community.

Mr. Schneider asked what the time table is?

Mr. Schwiegeraht said they would start to tear the school down as immediate as they start construction. The goal from a schedule perspective is to close and start construction in the mid to late summer of 2024. As they start construction the demolition will be one of the first things to begin. The building will take around 12 to 15 months to build. It would be available in mid to late 2025.

Mr. Schneider asked if there will be open green space until they're ready to do phase two? Answer is yes.

Mrs. Siwierka asked for a refresher of the what the total amount of the project will be.

Mr. Schwiegeraht said it is around 15 million as a total investment for phase one, which will be the 46 units.

Mrs. Davis asked if the development will have a Foster address, not Bond St.?

Mr. Schwiegeraht said it is one lot from Bond to Foster, but they will split it into 2 lots; one that will have frontage on Bond and one frontage on Foster. The first phase will happen on a future address that is half of the existing parcel. They will work on the lot split to accommodate the two phases. The development will occur on the northern portion of that lot split.

Mr. Oswald asked the developer how we're donating \$250,000 from ARPA funds and they were going to get matching funds to get this started. How did the happened that we agreed to that from the previous administration?

Mr. Schwiegeraht said as they started conversations with the City's Economic Development Team, Mayor's office and Planning and Zoning staff, the initially requested that \$250,000 from the previous administration. They assisted with a letter saying they could provide these funds. At that time there was an upcoming election and when they found out there would be a new mayor they coordinated to make sure they could pick that up with the new administration. From a matching funds perspective, 15 million and up to 50 units of new high-quality housing would be a value. It did come with a commitment from the previous administration knowing the benefit it could have.

Mayor Brubaker said Pivotal Housing and ECP did reach out to him. A concern was the building on Foster, which needed to be demolished and it was confirmed that it would be a part of the first phase. If we had to do the demolition, it would be more that the \$250,000 we're investing here. He was happy to support that.

Law Dir Deery said she as well as attorney Breunig and Asst Dir Calvert have made assurances, should Council approve this, the grant paperwork would specify that the money would go toward site preparation and demolition.

Mr. Stewart asked if the \$250,000 was a part of the first presentation? And what is the line item of the ARPA fund will this be coming from?

Mr. Schwiegeraht said when they went through the rezoning process, they didn't bring up any discussion related to other incentives and stayed focus as to if it was proper use for the zoning.

Finance Dir said they are in the process of preparing the 2024 permanent appropriations. There is probably a line item in a department that we already have that will fit for that. As we made our way through the 2023 appropriation process there was 3.3 million of unappropriated ARPA Funds and remained unappropriated through 2023. And that is available to spend this year.

Motion made by Mrs. Siwierka and second by Mr. Schneider to authorize an ordinance to appropriate the 'said' ARPA Funds, emergency clause requested.

MOTION CARRIES COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

4. The matter of a Wage Classification Change for Public Works Supervisor Position.

Referred By: Mayor Brubaker and HR Dir Yousefi

HR Dir Yousefi said there was a salary survey which created an entire compensation project. It was established that there are two jobs in the public works domain; a public works coordinator and a public works supervisor. The coordinator position was placed in band number B32 and the supervisor position was placed in C41. At that time the supervisors who were employed were already above the top of C41. So, a new rate was created; C41A which had one step on it and all of the Public Works supervisors were placed in that position. Those employees are all in those same positions as of now, no additional have been hired. Currently there is a vacancy for the PW supervisor. In the attempt to give a promotion to a coordinator into the supervisor position, that C41 band is inadequate and that coordinator is being paid at the highest step of B32 which is \$72,000. With OT that is earned in that position the actual annual pay comes to \$75,000. Using the current C41 range the most the employee would be able to earn at the top step would be \$79,000 which is only a 3% increase. There is more responsibility and no OT opportunity available at the supervisor level. She conducted a market survey and the C41 band that was originally used for the supervisor position is below market. Therefore, a recommendation is made to expand out C41A salary band using the current as the top step 12 and moving backward, at 3% increments to create 12 steps in C41A. This will give an opportunity to promote from within and give a fair wage for that position. This will have no effect on any other position except the public works supervisor.

Mrs. Siwierka said she will support this, but will add a note of caution that we shouldn't be doing any other changes to the salary ordinance until we do a comprehensive update. Current numbers are from 2018-2019. 40% of the market was the target at that time. She's not sure where we are with the market at this time. This matter should be passed and put in place due to the circumstances.

Motion made by Mrs. Siwierka and second by Mr. Cerra to authorize an ordinance for the 'said' wage classification change.

MOTION CARRIES COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

5. The matter of creating a Financial Review Board.

Referred By: Mayor Brubaker

Mayor Brubaker said he's been having conversations with councilwoman Siwierka about financial since he took office and he appreciates her sharing with him Chapter 176 and they discussed a financial review board. This plays into a campaign promise to residents about transparency. This was done last in 2009-2010. Inside Chapter 176, it allows for council to appoint 5 members to a financial review board to look over our finances. As we look into unknowns regarding the finances, the finance director has been outspoken and adamant over the last number of years with the ARPA dollars

that will be ending at the end of 2024. We need to be in a position that when they do go away, that we have a way to continue services to the residents of our city and this would be a way to do that. We also have 2 renewal levies on the books and neither one of them are up soon, but this is a great way for transparency when those renewals do come up. This financial review board would be assigned and appointed by council based on Ch 176. We want to start this process over the next 12 to 18 months and to look at it as we move into 2025 and 2026.

Motion made by Mr. Cerra and second by Mr. Schneider to authorize an ordinance for the appointment of a Financial Review Board pursuant to Ch 176.

MOTION CARRIES COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

6. The matter of replacing windows on west side of City Hall on floors 2 & 3.

Referred By: Mayor Brubaker

Asst Dir Strohsack said the windows on the west side of the building are in bad shape because they get all the sun, wind, rain, snow, wind, etc. They would like to seek approval to go out to bid to have those windows on the 2nd and 3rd floors replaced. This would be a 100% reimbursable grant through NOPEC. They have about \$185,000 of dispersible funds for this and estimate would be a little below that.

Mr. Lipian asked if that NOPEC is the STEP grant?

Mayor Brubaker said no, these are annual dollars that the City gets back from NOPEC which has not all been expended and we now have to expend it.

Mr. Schneider asked if there will be any issues with getting matching windows?

Mr. Strohsack said they've already gotten a preliminary estimate and no issue with that.

Mr. Oswald said he appreciates what we're doing with our building. He's glad improvements are being made.

Mrs. Siwierka asked what the timeframe is?

Mr. Strohsack said if there is only one bidder they should have it completed as long as the supply is available, by end of summer.

Motion made by Mrs. Siwierka and second by Mr. Cerra to authorize an ordinance for bids for the 'said' window replacement, emergency clause requested.

MOTION CARRIES COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

7. The matter of the H2Ohio Rivers Initiative Chloride Reduction Grant.

Referred By: Mayor Brubaker

(this was passed by Utilities Committee on Feb. 7th)

Asst Dir Strohsack explained that we currently buy our road brine, which is a product called aqua salina, that is purchased from a vendor. If we purchase a brine making machine, where we can make our own, it will benefit the City and we will have the equipment to have our own brine. The cost of the brine making machine is \$60,500 which will be paid for with this grant, which is a 100% reimbursable grant. There is \$75,000 allotted to communities that apply for it. The machine they've located is manufactured in Indiana. It's a top-notch machine, the price is \$60,500. You take a loader and load a hopper with the salt that we already have and the machine turns it into a 23.3% density and pumps it out into the tanks on the trucks which are already applying brine. By getting salt off the road, it's easier to prevent ice than to melt the ice. The brine goes down onto the roads as a liquid and actually adheres to the road. Without a brining operation, they put the granular salt on the road, waiting for the snow or ice to freeze and traffic will actually blow it off into the gutters and it gets washed down into the catch basins and eventually into rivers. That's why brine is so important. The funds will only be needed if we are awarded the grant. If we don't receive the grant, it will be paid for with the one-half percent income tax fund. The City would be saving money in the long run.

Mrs. Siwierka asked if this is on the State purchasing list?

Mr. Strohsack said no, it will be below the new \$75,000 threshold.

Mr. Oswald said he's read about salt ending up in lakes and he was wondering if this is the reason we would use brine? Are we still going to be able to use the salt?

Mr. Strohsack said he didn't know for sure, but they are trying to get that reduction in salt off the roads. Brine works well because it goes down as a liquid and actually adheres to the road. If you don't use brine, we use granular salt waiting for snow and ice to freeze. While waiting traffic blows it off into the gutters and it gets washed into catch basins and into rivers. The goal is to use less salt on the roads and more brine.

Motion made by Mr. Cerra and second by Mr. Schneider to authorize an ordinance to apply for and accept the 'said' grant. Emergency clause requested.

MOTION CARRIES COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

8. The matter of amending the Salary Ordinance for Muni Court Traffic Magistrate.

Referred By: Finance Dir Pileski / Muni Court Judges Bennett and White

Finance Dir Pileski said he had a conversation from the Muni Court Judges about the need and desire to hire a full-time traffic magistrate. There are more cases due to the traffic program where the EPD is issuing more citations. They want to add a full-time magistrate on the salary ordinance with 3 steps; \$105,000, 108,000 and \$110,000.

That would enable them to attract an attorney that would like to do this type of work. They would also like to include the current magistrate to have those same rates. This would involve one current employee and one new hire.

Law Dir Deery said she's not sure what their intentions are. Her understanding is that the current full-time magistrate is listed on the salary schedule as the full-time magistrate and not specified as civil or traffic, just listed as a, b and c.

Dir Pileski said yes, it's listed as a magistrate and step c is \$89,549.89, step b is \$94,324.19 and step a is \$99,727.00 which is where the current magistrate is at and he would be going from \$99,727 to \$110,000.

Dir Deery asked what may serve their purpose is to amend that salary schedule for that current position to what they're suggesting. They're not limited to how many magistrates they are able to hire assuming the budget supports it.

Dir Pileski said the County pays 40% of one magistrate. And new magistrate would be 100% city share. He said one magistrate position is fine with him.

Dir Deery said the case loads have increased. There is no indication that they will decrease. Her office has gone from having two full-time prosecutors and several part-time to now having four full-time and she doesn't see that changing. And they have been without a magistrate in traffic court since Magistrate Manning left to start her judgeship in Avon Lake Courts.

Mrs. Siwierka asked if this is full or part-time?

Dir Pileski said they are proposing a full-time traffic magistrate. They already have one full-time magistrate that handles everything else.

Mrs. Siwierka said they are looking to change the salary ordinance, which is the cleaner way to do this. She said it looks like there has been a half million dollars increase in fines that have been collected.

Finance Dir Farrell spoke on the matter that only one magistrate position is supported by the county. They will probably have to have two separate positions since one is partially paid by the County and one is not.

Dir Pileski said this is not part of the salary study. Muni Court opted out of that study. They are still under the longevity plan. Ohio Revised Code only enables one magistrate to be covered by the county.

Mrs. Siwierka suggested they ask the judge to go over this with the committee and answer some of these questions. In essence this is creating a new position. We should table this until we know exactly what they're looking for.

Mr. Oswald agrees with Mrs. Siwierka that we should table this. He said that the judges and magistrates do have an increase of their workload because of the new Traffic Division.

But, what happens when that tappers off? This has brought in an increase of revenue of \$570,000, where does that money go?

Dir Pileski said the fine money goes into the General Fund and there are some fines that are 'special fines' that go into their 'special fund', which is a special traffic magistrate fund. He asked the committee if they would be willing to have a special Finance Meeting before Council and he'll ask the judges to attend.

Motion made by Mrs. Siwierka and second by Mr. Schneider to Table this matter and follow the advice of the Finance Director.

MOTION CARRIES COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

President suggested this meeting begin at 6:15P.M. before the Council Meeting on Tuesday, February 20th.

9. The matter of amendments to the 2024 Temporary Appropriations.

[Standing Referral]

Referred By: Finance Directors Pileski and Farrell

There are none this evening.

Dir Pileski said they will be presenting the permanent appropriations at the next Finance Meeting and they have to be passed by March 31st.

Chair Davis asked for a motion to adjourn this evening's meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Schneider and second by Mrs. Siwierka to adjourn this evening's Finance Committee Meeting at 8:00 P.M.

MOTION CARRIES

Respectfully Submitted by,
Colleen Rosado, Secretary/Administrative Assistant