

MINUTES
CITY & SAFETY SERVICES COMMITTEE
November 25, 2019
7:00 p.m.

Members in Attendance: Kent Butler, Chair
Chris Fahl, Vice-Chair
Sarah Grace, Member

Administrators and/o
Other Elected Officials: President Knisely
Mayor Patterson
Auditor Hecht

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

- Firearms (amend ACC)
 - Grace – legislation has been adopted by the Ohio General Assembly that becomes effective December 28th, requiring us to adjust our Athens City Code to align with State legislation – Law Director has recommended aligning a part of our City Code, while retaining a second part – the change that will be made is to Section 13.07.04 C (2) to remove “which the offender must show by a preponderance of the evidence” – the prosecution will now have the burden of proof of self-defense – the part the City is retaining has to do with target practice and hunting within the corporate limits – the City will be maintaining its current restriction of prohibiting the discharging of firearms within the City limits, which is in the best interest of our residents
 - Butler – acknowledged the safety factor should target practice and hunting be allowed within the City limits where folks live within close proximity to each other
- Police Department
 - Butler – APD would like to dispose of (41) City firearms and (37) confiscated firearms as a trade-in to a Federally Licensed Firearms Dealer for the purchase of new firearms
- Athens Transit
 - Butler – request to authorize disposal of a 2013 bus with 194,372 miles
 - Mayor – noted some changes to our transit system moving forward with increased ODOT funding and a grant through the Department of Energy to purchase an electric bus, and possibly electric vehicles for Athens on Demand

that will be opened up to anyone – in the past it has been restricted to senior citizens and those with special needs – this is a \$2.00 fare anywhere in the County – interesting and exciting changes are coming

-Butler – appreciates continued support of this program – it is invaluable to our community

- Kimes Reservoir Project

-Bob Heady, City Engineer and Director of Public Works – this is a critical piece of infrastructure – it is aged and in poor condition – a \$130,000 CDBG grant has been secured for this project – from current estimates, the City's match will be \$751,200 – grant dollars must be spent by September, 2020

-President – asked if this repair will take care of the needs of the Kimes Reservoir

-Heady – the booster station is the lynchpin of this water system – in the future the reservoir could be taken off-line

ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. Firearms (amend)
2. Firearms (disposal)
3. Bus (disposal)
4. Kimes Reservoir

MINUTES NOVEMBER 25, 2019 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE 7:00 P.M.

Council Members in Attendance: Kent Butler
Sam Crowl
Chris Fahl
Sarah Grace
Peter Kotses
Patrick McGee
Jeff Risner

Administrators and/or
Other Elected Officials: President Knisely
Mayor Patterson

Item Discussed:

- Athens County Economic Development Council
 - Sara Marrs-Maxfield, Executive Director of the Athens County Economic Development Council (ACEDC) – presented Council with the Athens County Economic Overview and a full Economic Impact Report for projects highlighted in the 2019 annual report (see attached)
 - McGee – asked the following questions, (1) what “induced” employment means; (2) recalls that in the last couple of years the State has appropriated a lot of money for broadband, and asked if any of that money made its way to southeast Ohio; and (3) questioned why, on the employment chart, there are a large number of people commuting from Athens
 - Marrs-Maxfield – explained that, (1) “direct” employment is a company that is employing individuals; “indirect” employment are jobs that would be created as a result of that business expanding and locating in the community; and “induced” employment are jobs that are brought by consequences of the first two; (2) she does not know what happened to the State funding, but knows that there were certain requirements for federal/state sources – many rural areas were not qualifying for those because the FCC had inaccurate information about our availability of broadband – it was overstated by up to 21% -- the system that currently exists has providers completing a form that states the areas they serve, and it is census tract based – if they served one, two or three households in one census tract, they considered that entire tract served – our census tracts are not .5 square miles, but 250 square miles, so very different – they did not build the system to accommodate real rural numbers – as part of the broadband project,

Buckeye Hills, Ohio University, and ACEDC traveled to Washington, DC to talk about this issue and speak with the FCC – most of them were not aware since there was such a discrepancy in their maps and the reality of those truly served

Mayor Patterson – explained that part of this broadband project, assessing the terrain throughout (6) Appalachian counties that fall under the purview of Buckeye Hills, was to use the Test IT app, that not only demonstrated where there were areas with zero broadband, as opposed to the census tract, but spoke volumes to the speeds being received – he has a link to the map that he can share with Council for their review

-Marrs-Maxfield – none of that funding will be available until those maps are fixed; and (3) the commuter numbers will be used to attract more business growth in Athens County – the biggest challenge to businesses is talent, and Columbus is growing, thus the large number of commuters – our entire southeast Ohio region believes if the opportunities were here, buildings and sites for businesses, they would create jobs that would keep people closer to home

-Crowl – with the spec building construction, he is curious about the space that will remain around the Athens-Hocking Recycling Center (AHRC) should they have a need to expand their operation

-Marrs-Maxfield – there will be no additional available space – AHRC was made aware of that at the time they were allowed to purchase the (3) acres

-Kotses – asked if there are other areas within the County that are prime for more buildings

-Marrs-Maxfield – infrastructure to sites is key – while multiple locations have been pursued, they have, (1) been in the floodplain; (2) are not available at a reasonable price; and, or (3) infrastructure is lacking – ACEDC is working with what is build-site ready at the Industrial Park

-McGee – asked, when doing an analysis for Southeast Ohio/Athens County, if there are other areas that are used for comparisons – recently Asheville, NC was used as a comparison during discussion of the Baileys Trail System

-Marrs-Maxfield – Asheville, NC is lovely with the same kind of feel as Athens, but we are nothing like Asheville – its population is over 300,000, and they have significant industry – economically, we are nothing like them – there are comparisons and benchmarks with other communities that are more like us, numbers-wise

- Sewer Rates (increase)

-Bob Heady, City Engineer and Director of Public Works – proposed a rate increase of 8%, needed to service debt and cover costs – unexpected calamities early in the year can wipe out the \$30,000 annual maintenance and supply budget, and impact spending for the rest of the year – the City maintains nearly 400,000 feet of sanitary sewer lines and approximately 300 feet of storm sewer

lines (over 132 miles of sanitary/storm sewer lines) – equipment replacement is needed – this 8% increase would generate approximately \$147,000 – the City needs to reinvest in our aging infrastructure in order to continue to grow

-Crowl – appreciates the information for the need for additional funds, noting that our sewer rates were increased just last December, so he is curious as to whether this will be an annual ask

-Heady – last year's increase was to cover the City's annual debt service and this year's ask is to cover operation, maintenance, and equipment costs

-McGee – asked about capacity fees

-Heady – capacity fees are based on use

-Butler – expressed concern for those living on fixed incomes – however, he understands from the Administration that the City charges are less than neighboring communities, and the City is faced with maintenance of an aging infrastructure – this is a challenge – if left unattended the City's problems will continue to grow

-Risner – asked if it is the monthly base rate charge that will be increased

-Heady – it is the monthly base rate that will increase \$1.98 for 15,000 gallons or less

-Risner – so, the \$24.81 rate will increase by 8% -- asked if this increase is needed due to declining revenue because consumption has declined and consequently, rates have to be increased since others are conserving resources

-Heady – Ohio University is the City's largest sewer customer, so when they find ways to save water it does affect our revenue

-Risner – suggested looking at a different model for rate increases, possibly using the consumer price index as a basis, annually

-Heady – agrees with the concept, but this larger increase is needed at this time due to years of deferred maintenance – 8% will only net about \$100,000 toward maintenance

-President – agrees, the City should schedule an ongoing plan for the future – lower incremental rate increases of 1% or 2%

-Kotses – is not comfortable with continuing to raise rates – he, too, understands needing to consider maintenance of our infrastructure, but questioned at what expense

-President – it is necessary to raise rates to cover the City's expenses

-McGee – agrees with Kotses – he has some trepidation, but also understands it needs to happen

-Grace – deferred maintenance of our infrastructure ends up costing more in the long-run and is critical to public health and safety

ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. Sewer Rate Increase

MINUTES: FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

NOVEMBER 25, 2019

7:00 p.m.

Members in Attendance: Jeff Risner, Chair
Kent Butler, Vice-Chair
Sam Crowl, Member
Peter Kotses, Member

Administrators and/or
Other Elected Officials: President Knisely
Mayor Patterson
Auditor Hecht

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

- Prior Year Expense (Municipal Court)
 - Tonya Dye, Clerk of Courts – the Court is recertifying its specialized dockets with the Supreme Court, and through that process discovered that one of the bills for one of the providers had not been paid for services provided in 2018– explained this was due partly to the transition from the previous Clerk to the beginning of her tenure – she was unaware that money was due on the contract with Hopewell, and no notice was provided to the Court by Hopewell indicating a past due amount – there are two outstanding bills; 1) from January, 2018 to September, 2018 for \$9000, and 2) from October, 2018 to July, 2019 for \$10,000 – they are working on a contract for 2019-2020 – she requests City Council approve payment for the past due bills currently under contract and allocate \$7800 to cover the remainder for 2019 – pointed out that there is no impact on the General Fund, as this is a specialized fund with revenue in place
 - President Knisely – asked what service Hopewell provides
 - Dye – services for the Substance Abuse Mental Illness (SAMI) program, for DUI Court, and Diversion
- 2019 Appropriations/Transfers
 - Auditor – requested the following: increase Garbage Fund appropriation by \$250,000 for hauling contract – increase/decrease by \$5,000, from T.C. 500 to T.C. 100 in the Community Center to cover payroll through year-end – increase/decrease Fire Department fund lines for emergency repairs to the fire pumper truck
 - Director of TGC Scott Thompson – requested \$22,300 for replacement of the video production equipment, Tri-Caster – this computer was purchased in 2014 and is showing signs of failing – through a promotion this year, until December

13, the City can save \$13,000 toward this purchase – the total cost of the Tri-Caster and (2) cameras is \$22,300 instead of \$35,300 in 2020

-Auditor – Capital Improvements, 580.105 could be used for this purchase

- Athens Community Television

-Risner – “video service provider” fees paid to the City are declining because there are fewer television cable subscribers – these fees pay for the operation of Community Television – a meeting will be held tomorrow with Director Matt Green and the Administration to discuss the future of Athens Community Television

- 2020 Budget

-Mayor – meetings have been held with all department heads – going as lean as possible in T.C. 500, furniture and fixtures, computer equipment, and equipment purchases – working with the Auditor’s office to put together both personnel and non-personnel budgets

-President – from last year’s budget to this year, it looks fairly tight

-Risner – asked, at this time, how much is unappropriated in the General Fund

-Auditor -- \$223

-Councilman McGee – asked if the City’s interest income is included as part of the analysis of the next year’s budget, and whether you can draw from the interest to cover current expenses

-Auditor – explained that the money is pooled into several accounts – it is up to the Treasurer to look at the balances – the City can absolutely transfer account money from savings into checking – \$2.5 million should be maintained in our bank accounts

- Staffing/Non-Union Compensation

-Auditor – there is only a minor change to next year’s staffing – also, it is being recommended that a 2% salary increase be offered to non-union employees

- Non-Union Fringe Benefits

-Risner – donating employee must maintain 240 hours as opposed to 160 hours, 280 hours for Fire, of accumulated and unused sick leave after donation

-Mayor – this aligns with the Union contracts

- City Income Tax (reallocation)

-Risner – Street Fund allocation is being decreased by 1% (from 19% to 18%) and the General Fund will be increased by 1% (from 72% to 73%) – 1% is approximately \$129,000 annually

-Mayor – noted that with the increase in the State gasoline tax the City's Street Fund will receive an additional \$178,000 in 2020 – even with the 1% decrease, the Street Fund will add about \$50,000 with the increased gasoline tax

- Health Insurance (Third Party Administrator)
-Auditor – will be renewing our current Third Party Administrator – the City has been with the Employee Benefit Service Center for two years
- Stop-Loss Medical Insurance
-Auditor – again, renewing with current provider, Sirius America

ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. Authorize Municipal Court Prior Year Bill
2. Appropriations/Transfers
3. 2020 Budget
4. Staffing-Non-Union Compensation
5. Non-Union Fringe Benefits
6. City Income Tax (reallocation)
7. Third Party Health Insurance
8. Stop-Loss Medical Insurance

MINUTES
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 25, 2019
7:00 p.m.

Members in Attendance: Chris Fahl, Chair
Jeff Risner, Vice-Chair
Patrick McGee, Member
Sarah Grace, Member

Administrators and/or
Other Elected Officials: President Knisely
Mayor Patterson

Items Discussed:

- Athens City Code, Title 49
-Fahl – the City is working to consolidate all fees for services into Title 1 of the Athens City Code for easy access – will need two ordinances, one that states that Title 49 fees are established by separate ordinance, and one that will place the fees into Title 1

ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. Athens City Code Fees