MINUTES
CITY & SAFETY SERVICES COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 12, 2024 - 7:00 p.m.

Members in Attendance:	Micah McCarey, Chair Jeff Risner, Member Alan Swank Jessica Thomas, Member
Administrators and Other Elected Officials:	President Crowl Mayor Patterson Auditor Hecht Treasurer Thomas

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

- Residential Water Loss Protection Program
  -S-S Director – this is an opt-in fee credit for significant water loss (similar to insurance) – currently our City Code only allows for relief of a residential water break, and they can demonstrate that it did not go down the sewer, the City will waive the sewer portion of the bill – this is separate and distinct from service line insurance – this fee would be $36.00 per year

  -Clodfelter, South Shannon Avenue – asked if the City would be benefiting from the $36.00 premium
  -S-S Director – it would be a revenue stream that would go directly into the Water Fund – there is no third party involved

  -Swank – asked if it applies to rental properties
  -S-S Director – yes
  -Swank – asked if this would be 5/8” lines
  -S-S Director – yes, primarily residential lines

ITEMS NEEDED ON AN UPCOMING CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. Water Loss Protection

MINUTES
NOVEMBER 12, 2024
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
7:00 P.M.

Council Members in Attendance:	Beth Clodfelter Micah McCarey Jeff Risner Solveig Spjeldnes Alan Swank Jessica Thomas Michael Wood
Administrators and/or Other Elected Officials:	President Crowl Mayor Patterson Auditor Hecht Treasurer Thomas

Items Discussed:

- Income Tax Increase
  -President – current income tax is 1.95% -- in December 2016 our general municipal operations was 1.65% -- the City continues to take a close look at its General Fund balance – Administration is requesting raising the general municipal operations income tax rate by 0.3% to a total tax of 2 .25% -- the City's revenue from Ohio University has declined – in 2008 Ohio University paid 42% of the City's income tax revenue and in 2023 that has decreased to 29%

  -S-S Director – emphasized this requested increase is for general revenue – presented and explained the attached graphs – fully recognizes it is a fairly significant decision to pass a tax increase along to the voters – request is to place this issue on the primary ballot next spring – goal is that legislation be provided to the Board of Elections no later than end of January 2025

  -Swank – questioned what happens if this doesn't pass – what will the City look like?
  -S-S Director – over the first several years there would likely be a reduction in police and fire protection – when that becomes untenable then the City would look at decreasing other services such as recreation and streets

-McCarey – asked how significant the decrease would be to the Street Fund – would the increase allow for additional projects, or simply be a cushion for planned projects
-S-S Director – the Street Fund currently receives 15% of the income tax mix, approximately ($2,250,000) annually, (1% produces approximately $150,000) – the increased taxes would increase that by approximately ($450,000) annually – projects range in cost from $4 to $7 million dollars

-Clodfelter – asked what the additional $450,000 might add to the number of streets being paved
-S-S Director – he will review the numbers and provide that at the next meeting

-President – clarified the following income tax collections:

(1) General Revenue: 1.6%, permanent
(2) Community Center Operation: 0.05% permanent
(3) Street Improvements: 0.10% , levied through 2030
(4) Arts, Parks, and Recreation: 0.10%, levied through 2035, and
(5) Public Safety: 0.10%, levied through 2042

-Wood – asked about other ways to address the declining revenue instead of levying a tax on those individuals working in the City, pointing out the nu mber of fire runs to Ohio University and questioning whether they can pay a fairer share of that cost
-S-S Director – Ohio University is a State institution governed by the State Legislature – the City can tax their employees and charge utility fees, but as far as charging them more for existing fire services, which would be a State Law, not local

-Swank – in lieu of raising the income tax and in an effort to spread the base around, asked whether an inside millage would be feasible – if so, then what would that inside millage need to be to bring in an equivalent amount to the .03% income tax increase
-S-S Director – believes our current inside property tax millage is 3 mills (inside Athens Township, inside the City) and that an additional seven mil ls within the City limits could be added – emphasized that government property, including Ohio University, is tax exempt – it would likely require a property tax levy for voters inside the City – he can work on that number and report back
-Swank – asked if it is feasible to do a combination levy of income tax and property tax – asked about a perpetual vs specific time period levy, and questioned why a May primary instead of a November general election (an off-year primary typically has low voter turnout)
-S-S Director – with regard to a permanent vs. time specific levy, his only experience with temporary levies are those that are tied to tangible items

-Thomas – as a point of reference, for those within the City limits on the lower end of the income scale, with a median income of about $34,800, this tax increase would amount to $2.00 a week or approximately $104 annually

-Spjeldnes – noted that the potential Ridges Redevelopment Project will likely be approved in December with an anticipated 700 housing units (adding to the income tax), but this also means the need for a lot of infrastructure, and questioned how that might affect this levy discussion
-S-S Director – understands that what is being approved in December is the roughly one-tenth of The Ridges property from Ohio University to the new Community Authority, roughly 78 acres – this would be a 5-10-year buildout on the housing units – believes the City's outlay on infrastructure has already happened – unaware of any outstanding major investment for that initiative

-Swank – asked about scheduling legislation
-S-S Director – again, it will need to be adopted and provided to the Board of Elections by the end of January 2025

-Clodfelter – requested the need for creative alternatives to a perpetual income tax – this increase needs thoughtful consideration, and City should try to minimize the amount of the increase

-President – the Council will revisit this issue

- City Council Rules (amendments)
  -Swank – see attached red-font changes – Rule 1, Regular Sessions – changes "legal" holiday to "Federal" holiday – City Council will meet the Tuesday following each Federal holiday held on a Monday

  -President – noted that President's Day and Indigenous Peoples' Day are both floating holidays for City employees – the City Building is open on these two days, and is the reason City Council meets – on all other Monday holidays the City Building is closed to the public and the meetings are bumped to Tuesday

  -Swank – Rule 14, Public Speaks – simply cleans up and defines the language

  -Swank – Rule 29, Committee Meetings, adds consistency between Regular Sessions and Committees with regard to providing information and public participation

  -Thomas – suggested removing noon

-Spjeldnes – suggested by end of business on Friday
-McCarey – questioned what happens if information is not received on an item appearing on the Agenda until after the deadline
-Swank – requested changing it to close of business on Friday, un derstanding there may be exceptions
-President – doesn’t believe close of business day is explicit – would p refer 4:00 p.m.

MINUTES
NOVEMBER 12, 2024
FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Members in Attendance:	Jeff Risner, Chair Beth Clodfelter, Member Micah McCarey, Member Michael Wood, Member
Administrators and/or Other Elected Officials:	President Crowl Mayor Patterson Auditor Hecht Treasurer Thomas

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

- Economic Development Council (EDC) presentation, contract renewal
  -Mollie Fitzgerald, Executive Director, Economic Development Council, provided an overview of the 2024 EDC activities (see attached)

  -Spjeldnes – asked about prospects for the Poston Road spec building
  -Fitzgerald – possibly a local company looking to expand, or a new business – end goal for the Port Authority is that it offer living wage jobs – would like to find a tenant in early 2025 to get that return on the investment, and continue to build new spec buildings that can support other businesses – noted it is easier to support existing/local businesses; it is more challenging to attract out of town/state businesses to Athens

  -Clodfelter – asked about EDC's role in the ever-growing Columbus Road area
  -Fitzgerald – EDC has been involved in Brownfield funding, assessment and cleanup – excited to be a partner where they can be helpful in this redevelopment
  -Spjeldnes – glad to hear about EDC's efforts with Brownfield cleanup – that could make a difference in the number of properties available for growth and expansion – understands there is some interest in low-income housing in the Columbus Road corridor

  -Swank – asked if lack of housing in Athens is a detriment to attracting new businesses
  -Fitzgerald – lack of housing is a big issue, and one that has not changed – it is hard to focus on business attraction efforts when you know you cannot support the workforce that those companies coming in would require – the Port Authority does have tools to incentivize and support housing development, and it makes sense for them to be involved in housing opportunities and projects
  -Swank – with the population decline in Appalachia, questioned how EDC can sell Athens County
  -Fitzgerald – need to lean on Ohio University as a selling point – cost of living is less – quality of life is important to attract and retain companies – our community has a lot of amenities, but it is still a challenge

-Swank – asked about the problem of empty storefronts
-Fitzgerald – again, the EDC does not have many programs or resources to assist small businesses – it is so important to have uptown vibrant communities

-Wood – asked about other initiatives the Council could support
-Fitzgerald – it is important to get the University at the table in support of housing ideas to recruit folks to Athens
-Spjeldnes – suggested Community Land Trusts
-Fitzgerald – that could be a potential solution – the challenging part is a funding mechanism to acquire the properties

-Risner – noted that the City's current contract with EDC expires December 31st and legislation will be needed to approve a new 3-year contract
-Clodfelter – asked how the City funds the EDC
-S-S Director – it is funded through the City's General Fund, outside administrative services

- Sale of SRECs
  -Risner –Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SREC's) – SRECs are a way to incentivize green energy – communities that are generating renewable (solar) power create SRECs – one SREC is created for every megawatt hour of electric produced – SREC's have a dollar value like other commodities and can be sold, bought, or traded to other communities who have no green energy but would like to take advantage of programs that dictate having renewable energy, so they buy SREC credits, showing that they are contributing to a greener world – their dollar value depends on where they are sold – Ohio SREC's can only be sold to entities within the state or in adjacent states – noted that the market selling price in Ohio is $3.00/SREC – in Pennsylvania the price is $31.25/SREC and with the amount of megawattage the City of Athens is producing, the SRECs could be worth $86,000 to $92,000/year – the Administration would like to begin selling our SRECs – the City will need to establish a brokerage account with a firm that specializes in the selling of SRECs and the best type of program to generate money – he hopes the funds received will be used to produce more green energy and value here within the City, or to pay on the debt the City has accumulated to build our solar arrays

  -S-S Director – the City produces in the range of 26,000 to 39,000 megawatt hours of electricity annually – the City currently has arrays at the City Wastewater Treatment Plant, Water Treatment Plant, the pool, the Community Center roof and parking lot, and will soon have arrays on the Armory, the Parking Garage, and the Fire Station – would like to market the SREC's – plan for revenue derived from the leasing of these SRECs is to remit that money into the Capital Improvements Fund – this would allow the funds to be used for an absolute emergency; it does not have to be renewable energy related – ultimately, would like these funds to be allowed to build for about six years, and then in combination with the revenue generated from these SRECs, plus the carbon fee revenue, to exercise the option to purchase the solar arrays at the Wastewater Plant, the pool, and on the roof of the Community Center – his hope is that there will be no debt when buying out the power purchase agreements for these arrays in six years

  -Treasurer – is prepared to put the money received into an investment account

-Alan Swank, Townsend Place – suggested keeping the legislation tight as to expenditures from the leasing of these SRECs – agrees, revenue should be used to build green energy

-Clodfelter – wise to think beyond the six years – do what we can to make sure these funds will be used for renewable energy or ways to help the climate – agrees with Risner about putting in more charging stations, buying more electric vehicles for the City fleet, or possibly energy efficiency improvements

-McCarey – asked about the process of purchasing the SRECs, whether it would be administrative
-S-S Director – it would be an administrative function after City Council approves a contract to lease the SRECs
-McCarey – asked about the demand for sales
-S-S Director – there is continuing demand for green energy in the markets where the City is allowed to sell

-Wood – asked about the loss of production power for these arrays after six years
-S-S Director – remaining life would be 20+ years

-McCarey – asked if this will require an update of the City's Environment & Sustainability Plan
-President – will not change the plan, simply update the metrics

-Clodfelter – asked about management time this program will require from City employees
-S-S Director – a lot of time went into researching the leasing of the SRECs – hope is that once the City identifies a brokerage and establishes the accounts, very little time will be required

-McCarey – asked if the projects in other communities leasing our SRECs are intended to make them energy efficient
-President – explained that Ohio University purchases its electricity with 100% SRECs, meaning that all of the electricity Ohio University is purchasing is coming from renewable sources – so, Ohio University can claim the carbon reduction credit of its electricity being associated with renewable energy, even though they're not behind the meter – these are wind farms in Texas that have RECs, so the University pays a higher per kilowatt hour price than you could get directly from AEP to fund additional renewable energy projects – it's a way to take credit for renewable energy, unlike the City of Athens, even though you are not generating electricity – understands some Council Members like the idea of a green revolving fund, and asked about the recommendation to place the revenue into Fund 580
-S-S Director – Fund 580 is a relatively restricted fund for capital improvements, and will not require the Auditor to create a special fund
-Treasurer – added that the State frowns on municipalities creating more funds

- 2025 Staffing
  -S-S Director – highlighted changes are attached – noted that the Ohio Revised Code sets the positions that the Legislative Authority can set within the Court – th

is is the first year these positions have been reflected in the City's annual staffing and compensation ordinances
-Clodfelter – asked by how much the staffing levels have been reduced in 2025
-S-S Director – it is roughly a quarter of an FTE

- 2025 Third Party Health Insurance Administrator (TPA, contract)
  -S-S Director – will continue with the current TPA – there is a slight increase in cost from last year (about $3000 annually)

- 2025 Group Excess Loss Medical Insurance (contract)
  -S-S Director – this additional insurance is for single claims exceeding $110,000 – received three bidders – lowest bid was Sirius Point American Insurance Company, the existing carrier – again, there is a slight increase in cost because the City has a higher number of people, however, the individual premiums actually dropped $.04 cents per individual, noting that our workforce is skewing younger with larger families (about 35-40 individuals greater)

ITEMS NEEDED ON AN UPCOMING CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. EDC
2. SRECs
3. 2025 Staffing
4. 2025 TPA
5. 2025 Group Excess Loss

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of Athens City Council (Spec. Sess.) Meeting

Held November 12, 20 24

ATHENS CITY COUNCIL: SPECIAL SESSION, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2024, 7:00 P.M.

Athens City Council met in Special Session at the above hour with the following members present: Clodfelter, McCarey, Risner, Spjeldnes, Swank, Thomas, and Wood.

Also present: President Crowl, Mayor Patterson, Auditor Hecht, and Treasurer Thomas.

ORDINANCE FOR THIRD READING:

<u>0-98-24</u>
AN ORDINANCE APPROVING THE ATHENS-HOCKING SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN. Swank moved for Adoption; Clodfelter seconded. Adoption was approved unanimously.

At approximately 7:05 p.m. Clodfelter moved to adjourn; Thomas seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

President of Council

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

MINUTES
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 12, 2024

Members in Attendance:	Alan Swank, Chair Solveig Spjeldnes, Member Jessica Thomas, Member Michael Wood, Member
Administrators and/or Other Elected Officials:	President Crowl Mayor Patterson Auditor Hecht Treasurer Thomas

Items Discussed:

- Title 23, Sign Regulations (political sign size)
  -Swank – standard sign size is 432 square inches (24” x 18”) – proposed to change the City Code from 350 square inches to 432 square inches

  -Wood – questioned if the City can regulate signs that display obscenities
  -Swank – suggested asking the Law Director at first reading of the legislation

- Sunday Creek Horizons (SCH) 2025 contract renewal
  -Swank – this is a one-year contract – expanded scope of activities at same cost as last year that will include: City Grant-Funded Projects, completion of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan, and Community and Economic Development Activities – some projects that have been identified include: redevelopment of the Columbus Road Fire Station, utilization of the City’s Fiber Assets, construction of the ALCO Boat Ramp, and establishment of a Physical Hub for the Farmers’ Market – SCH will continue to advocate for the City at the legislative level in Columbus – they have been successful in procuring millions of dollars of grant funding

  -Service-Safety Director – SCH has proven they are a good asset to the City

  -President – appreciates that at the State level they can be advantageous in the current climate working with both parties to move Athens forward

ITEMS NEEDED ON AN UPCOMING CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. Sign Regulations
2. Sunday Creek Horizon

MINUTES
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 12, 2024

Members in Attendance:	Solveig Spjeldnes, Chair
	Beth Clodfelter, Member
	Micah McCarey, Member
	Jeff Risner, Member
Administrators and/or Other Elected Officials:	President Crowl
	Mayor Patterson
	Auditor Hecht
	Treasurer Thomas

- Disposal of (2) Transit Vehicles
  -Spjeldnes – HAPCAP would like to dispose of the following:
    - a 2016 Ford E-450 with 313,491 miles, and
    - a 2018 Ford E-450 with 218,326 miles

ITEMS NEEDED ON AN UPCOMING CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. Disposal