MINUTES
CITY & SAFETY SERVICES COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 26, 2020
7:00 p.m.

Members in Attendance via Videoconference: Sarah Grace, Chair
Chris Fahl, Vice-Chair
Beth Clodfelter, Member

Administrators and
Other Elected Officials via Videoconference: President Knisely
Mayor Patterson
Interim Service-Safety Director Pyle

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

- Base Radio Replacement (APD)
  -Grace – the current system was purchased in the early to mid-90's for radio dispatch and it is failing and no longer repairable – purchase estimate is $112,000-$120,000 – additional benefit to this newer technology will allow for future upgrades – it is also a portable system – current year funds are available for this purchase

  -Fahl – this is a needed investment – good communication channels are essential

ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. Base Radio Replacement

MINUTES
OCTOBER 26, 2020
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
7:00 P.M.

Council Members in Attendance via Videoconference: Beth Clodfelter
Sam Crowl
Chris Fahl
Peter Kotses
Sarah Grace
Jeff Risner
Arian Smedley

Administrators and/or
Other Elected Officials via Videoconference: President Knisely
Mayor Patterson
Interim Service-Safety Director Pyle

Items Discussed:

- COVID-19 (update)
  -Jack Pepper, Athens City-County Health Department Administrator, provided a general overview – in August with the return of a portion of our student population the City saw an increase in cases – in the last three weeks the City has seen a transition from, almost exclusively the 18-29 age demographic, to spread within our community that is not directly connected to the college campus – currently there are 19 confirmed cases within a long-term care facility, escalating from none on Friday – this shows how this very contagious virus quickly spreads within a congregate setting – two pop-up testing clinics were held late summer, early fall that didn't show a lot of positive results (from approximately 800 tests, less than half a dozen tested positive) – the Governor is willing to allocate resources, at no cost, for symptom or asymptomatic testing – as part of the State's color public alert system (yellow, being the lowest; orange; red and purple), the City has maintained orange for some time – our local hospital is starting to see an increase in cases in both the emergency room and those being admitted – today, the Ohio Department of Health has indicated that the viral load in our waste water has seen a 10-fold increase over the last couple of weeks – routine sampling is being done at the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant that can be an indicator in terms of the virus that is present

  -Gillian Ice, Ohio University Heritage College of Medicine and also serving as the Special Assistant for Public Health, provided a summary of the student population case numbers – confirmed there was an increase in cases about two

weeks after Phase II of students returning to campus – that increase peaked last week and has since seen a decline in cases among students – during this same time, testing has increased for both on and off-campus students – the positivity rates went from very high early on and is now down to 6.3% -- testing capacity continues to increase every day – congregate living has seen dramatic spread of both symptomatic and asymptomatic positive testing, requiring the quarantining of certain dormitories – the predominate spread is through small gatherings that let their guard down – continue to educate the students on reducing their risk and risk to the community – the University will be instituting weekly testing for on-campus students and next semester adding bi-weekly testing for off-campus students

-Interim Service Safety Director Pyle – spoke about APD and enforcement – APD does not get a lot of complaints for either mask violations or mass gatherings, but do actively police for the latter – officers believe that students are rising to the challenge

-Mayor Patterson – APD has been very vigilant when patrolling to address any gatherings of more than 10 – late June, early July is when the City saw its first spike in the number of cases – in mid-August our case number went way down – we are now seeing more positive cases per day than have been seen all along

-Smedley – very beneficial overview – asked if the City has any areas that are considered hotspots and, if so, any recommendations to control the spread
-Pepper – folks are suffering from COVID-19 fatigue and it's very easy to become complacent – the continuing message for controlling hotspots is to continue to practice all of those public health measures, hand washing, masking, and social distancing – understanding there is risk no matter where you go – this is a very contagious disease – now is not the time to become complacent; now is the time to become vigilant

-Clodfelter – asked about the capacity of O'Bleness Hospital to take care of intensive care patients, and the number of ventilators that are available
-Pepper – generally speaking, ours is a rural hospital and not built to manage a large load of high-need patients – with a pandemic it doesn't take long for a hospital to exceed its capacity – the number of ventilators is less than 10
-Interim S-S Director – the plan early on was that critical COVID-19 cases in small rural hospitals would be sent to Columbus, Cincinnati and Cleveland

-Grace – asked about an estimated date for additional free pop-up testing sites in our area
-Pepper – within the next few weeks, sooner rather than later – will be run by the National Guard
-Grace – asked where those might be held
-Pepper – the Athens County Fairgrounds would be a nice centrally located site, or possibly at an Ohio University venue

-Risner – is concerned that some restaurant employees are not wearing masks and questioned enforcement – what responsibility do the owners and managers have to enforce mask wearing
-Pepper – there is a complaint form on the City-County Health website, and they do follow up on complaints – it is a struggle with the food service industry and in convenience stores in gaining mask compliance – the owners/managers are obligated to ensure their staff are properly wearing facial coverings unless they have an ADA medical exemption

-Crowl – encouraged the public to get a flu shot

-Smedley – asked Interim S-S Director Pyle if there were any lessons learned from the unofficial Ohio University Homecoming events that might best mitigate any similar issues leading up to Halloween weekend
-Interim S-S Director – the 6:00 a.m. bar openings were a surprise – the Mayor met with the bar owners about being more communicative about changes in their hours of operation – preparation is key
-Mayor – has been meeting with the bar owners for some time now and was disheartened that this change was not shared with City officials – that was not on the radar and when it occurred there wasn't sufficient staffing to help mitigate the situation – he has been informed by the bar owners there will be no changes in hours of operation for the weekend of October 31st

-Clodfelter – asked Dr. Ice where the University's testing is being evaluated and how quickly the results are received
-Ice – currently the University is partnering with Ohio Health for symptomatic testing and are discussing expansion to include asymptomatic contacts as well – asymptomatic testing is being run by CVS – they are on campus offering a rapid viral test with 15 minute results – they are in discussions with several different vendors to find the best and most efficient fit for the University

-Emilyn Lagger, attendee, asked whether testing is mandatory for Ohio University students
-Ice – yes, it is mandatory now and will continue to be so going forward

- ARTS/West Update (Director Terri Moore)
  -Director Moore – provided an update on the status of ARTS/West as well as her plan to return Program Specialist Emily Beveridge to work – she recommends that Emily return to work on November 2nd in full time status – this employee was placed on two-weeks paid leave with a temporary lay-off on August 7th due to lack of work (canceled rentals, programs and services) due to COVID-19 – the Governor issued mandatory closures – all facilities were closed on March 16th – reopening was initiated under the Order of "Restart Ohio" and the Athens Community Center was opened on June 15th under the gym and fitness center requirements and recommendations – on July 30th the City-County Health

Department was contacted with regard to opening programs at ARTS/West – it was recommended that the programs be offered virtually, if at all possible – the performing arts restart Order was not offered until August 24th with guidelines and recommendations requiring capacity reduction to 15% (reducing participants from 273 to 41) – other requirements are: 6 ft. social distancing with group activities restricted to 10 and under – equipment has been purchased with CARES Act funds to assist with virtual programming, and the needed conduit for fiber should take place in a couple of weeks – moving forward, this will be critical to offering remote services at ARTS/West

-Mayor – enhancing connectivity is vital – the City was able to purchase fiber with current appropriations – feels strongly that virtual content on a reliable basis is what will make ARTS/West successful moving forward – COVID-19 is not ending anytime soon – these are extremely difficult and challenging times – depolarizing ionizer equipment, a system that draws down particulates, to include COVID-19 particulates, and remove them from the circulating air was purchased using CARES Act funding and installed in several City Buildings, including the Community Center and ARTS/West

-Crowl – asked whether attendees at the Community Center are following the policies that are in place, and whether the Center is under the same 15% capacity as discussed for ARTS/West
-Director Moore – there was no capacity set for gym and fitness center openings – there are mandates for social-distancing and masks must be worn to the extent possible when working out, but definitely when entering/exiting the building and when participants are idle – some patrons have needed reminding, but for the most part it's been smooth – the Community Center is averaging approximately 140 attendees on Mondays, Saturdays approximately 40, and through the week it varies – this month a membership campaign is underway and there are folks purchasing memberships – the courts in the gym are now reserved for basketball and pickle ball – again, that has changed and is now being monitored – she continues contact with Jack Pepper at the City-County Health Department on making programs available, and as next phases open – looking at ways to potentially offer youth programs – there are currently outdoor programs, but as winter approaches need to determine what can safely be offered inside the facility – hoping to offer programs that are either revenue neutral or ones that can capture revenue

-Crowl – asked how those participation numbers compare to pre-pandemic
-Director Moore – about 1/3 capacity

-Smedley – is pleased to see there is a plan for ARTS/West to reopen safely – understands the financial piece is still a concern and is hopeful that some of the virtual programming that we're able to provide will be revenue generating – she is aware there is discussion about creating "Friends of ARTS/West" and asked about the status of that

-Director Moore – initially, the APR Advisory Board discussed a “Friends of APR), though it might make sense to have a “Friends of Arts” – may need to go with three different groups, Arts, Parks and Recreation – she will continue thinking through the best way to handle this – she understands that the Far East Side Neighborhood Association would like consideration of having a “Friends of Sells Park” (which could be that “Parks” piece)
-Smedley – while it may be a management challenge, she believes support for each of these will come from different people, so it might be beneficial to have all three

-Director Moore – pointed out that within the last three years there has been a funding commitment by the City to ARTS/West (2017-2018 renovation of $190,000; 2018 rear exterior accessibility, and upgrade of audio and computer equipment; and 2019 new carpet, tile, paint, refinishing the stairs, and a permanent stage accessibility ramp this November – we have positioned ourselves for more good things to happen there

- Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act
-President – Mayor has received a request from the Ohio State Coordinator of the Great Lakes Regional Citizens Climate lobby – Federal Legislation began moving through the House of Representatives in January, 2019 – that particular legislation would establish a fee on fossil fuels at the point of entry into the economy in an effort to reduce carbon emissions – the legislation is due to expire at the end of the year – City Council is being asked to introduce a resolution to endorse House Bill 763 – Athens has supported many environmental initiatives since 2007 including Green Fleets Policy, Solar Energy Systems, Solar-Powered Recycling, Climate Action Plan, and Electric Carbon Fee – the resolution seems like a reasonable request

-Crowl – there are a number of people on the Environment & Sustainability Commission who have worked closely with related issues, including our own Athens Carbon fee, and the Commission is very supportive of Council’s consideration to endorse this 2019 Act – believes it hits the triple bottom line of sustainability – it benefits the people through a monthly dividend that comes back to Americans – it supports jobs and clean energy economy, and the environment

-Fahl – this fits well with our Climate Emergency Resolution adopted by City Council earlier this year –noted that in the State of Texas there are more people employed in the wind energy production sector than in the oil and gas sector – this is very forward-thinking legislation – transitioning toward cleaner carbon-free fuel and energy sources – great push toward zero carbon

-Clodfelter – asked what this would mean for the average family in Athens
-Crowl – shared that this Act would place a fee on fossil fuels; coal, oil and gas – the idea is that this will drive down pollution and greenhouse gas emissions which will lead industry to move toward cleaner and cheaper options for energy

production – the money that is collected from the carbon fee goes back to the American people every month – the government doesn't keep any of the money – it also protects U.S. manufacturers and jobs – imported goods will pay this carbon fee adjustment at the border, and goods that are exported from the U.S. will receive a refund – this is an escalating policy and it is estimated that in year 10 the average family of four would receive $4,410 – estimate that over 2.1 million jobs will be created over 10 years

ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. Energy Innovation Resolution

MINUTES: OCTOBER 26, 2020
FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
7:00 p.m.

Members in Attendance via Videoconference:	Sam Crowl, Chair Jeff Risner, Vice-Chair Peter Kotses, Member Arian Smedley, Member
Administrators and/or Other Elected Officials via Videoconference:	President Knisely Mayor Patterson Interim Service-Safety Director Pyle

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

- Staffing (amend)
  -Crowl – Assistant City Engineer Jessica Adine has agreed to serve as Interim Director of EPW – Administration requests a pay upgrade to $36.91 per hour – this will sunset upon hiring a new Director, or through the next calendar year

  -Mayor – this will be equal pay for equal work

  -Smedley – agrees, when assuming additional responsibilities, additional compensation is to be expected

  -Interim S-S Director – noted that this pay increase will be retroactive to September 29th, the day she started the duties for this position

  -Risner – agrees that this increase should be retroactive

  -Kotses – supports

- Appropriations/Transfers
  -Crowl – need to transfer approximately $23,000 from the Judge's Computer Fund to the Clerk's Computer Fund to pay for the case management system upgrade from a technology grant received earlier in the year

  -Risner – asked whether an appropriation will be needed for purchase of the fiber to ARTS/West
  -Interim S-S Director – this expenditure will be made through existing monies
  -Risner – asked about the cost
  -Interim S-S Director -- approximately $35,000

ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. EPW Interim Director
2. Interfund Transfer

MINUTES
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 26, 2020
7:00 p.m.

Members in Attendance via Videoconference:	Chris Fahl, Chair Jeff Risner, Vice-Chair Sarah Grace, Member Arian Smedley, Member
Administrators and/or Other Elected Officials via Videoconference:	President Knisely Mayor Patterson

Items Discussed:

- Special Right-of-Way Permit (East Park Drive)
  -Fahl – two (2) directional signs have been requested on East Park Drive and East State Street to the new Marietta Memorial Hospital – the sign at East State Street/East Park Drive will also include the City Park, Pool, and Dog Park – this permit is for 7 years and will require renewal after that

ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. Special R-O-W Permit

MINUTES
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 26, 2020
7:00 p.m.

Members in Attendance via Videoconference:	Peter Kotses, Chair Sam Crowl, Vice-Chair Beth Clodfelter, Member
Administrators and/or Other Elected Officials via Videoconference:	President Knisely Mayor Patterson Interim Service-Safety Director Pyle

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

- 24-Hour Parking (amend ACC)
  -Kotses – request to amend 24-hour continuous on-street parking to be suspended from December 13 through January 2

- Uptown Holiday Parking
  -Kotses – this is to encourage visitors to the uptown area – parking will be suspended after 5:30 p.m. on Thursdays in December and every Saturday from November 28 through December 26 in the City Parking Garage, excluding 2-hour metered spaces on Upper Level 1 – also, the on-street metered parking fees in the uptown area will be suspended after 5:00 p.m. from December 13 through January 2

  -Mayor – additional information and possible changes will be forthcoming after an upcoming Athens Uptown Business Association (AUBA) meeting later this week

- Issue I Funds
  -Kotses – request to submit a grant application – this is a State program through the Ohio Public Works Commission, State Capital Improvements or Local Transportation Improvement Funds -- if received, this grant would be used for sidewalk and pedestrian improvements, specifically on the west side

  -Clodfelter – is delighted that the City has chosen to focus on improving the infrastructure on the west side

  -Smedley – agrees – questioned what pedestrian improvements would entail
  -Interim S-S Director – these could include marked crosswalks and pedestrian crossing signs, improved lighting – this is a major investment on the west side, one that is long overdue

-Mayor – added that significant improvements will be made on West Washington Street, using grant funds through the CDBG fund allocation

ITEMS NEEDED ON AN UPCOMING CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. 24-Hour Parking
2. Uptown Holiday Parking
3. Issue I Funds