

MINUTES NOVEMBER 9, 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

Items Discussed:

- Virtual Public Meetings
 - President – on March 27 the Legislature passed SB 365 allowing public bodies to hold meetings electronically through November 30 – the Ohio Municipal League has suggested municipalities approve a resolution urging an extension of this deadline to continue to hold electronic meetings
 - Fahl – with case numbers continuing to increase she is very concerned about returning to in-person meetings at this time
 - Kotses – believes the public may not feel comfortable attending in-person meetings
 - Smedley – supports a resolution – Athens City Council has continued to be very efficient and effective meeting remotely and including the public
 - Clodfelter – supports – COVID-19 needs to be controlled before returning to in-person meetings – seems like a reckless decision to make at this time – questioned whether, with socially-distanced spacing in the Council Chambers, whether there would be enough space for the public to attend
 - President – a preliminary assessment of the Council Chambers indicates that approximately eight members from the public could be in attendance – the public should be able to continue to participate by Zoom

-Risner – supports – he is in the high risk age group – pointed out that the Council Chambers is a small room with low ceilings and lacks quality air movement – safety, even socially-distanced, for a period of two hours is questionable – there is no good scenario in terms of public health

-TGC Director Thompson – in consultation with the City-County Health Department, he explained that there would be a two-tier row of Council Members on the dais and in front on the floor, the President and Clerk would sit off to one side of the room with the Mayor, Auditor and Law Director on the opposite side, and possibly 8-9 members of the public could be spread throughout the middle of the room – of course masks would be mandatory, hand sanitizer and temperature checks would be taken at the door along with contact information of all attendees

-Grace – agrees, that from a public health perspective, going back to in-person meetings with a group of our size to include public attendance is not a good decision – as we speak, the pandemic is becoming a very serious situation in Ohio – it is putting a terrible strain on our population and, if the caseload continues to grow exponentially, also our ability to provide healthcare will be compromised – we all need to continue to be safe and mindful of our fellow citizens – wear a mask

-Crowl – with the help of many, praised the way City Council has made the adjustment to holding virtual meetings – the transition has worked well, and he believes it should continue as long as there is a health reason to do so

-Fahl – pointed out that public participation has actually increased now that citizens can participate from their homes

-President – agrees, there has been a lot of public participation

-Mayor – shared Council's concerns during a Zoom meeting over the weekend with the Governor and Lt. Governor – both agree that virtual meetings should continue given the current state of affairs (going from roughly 1,000 cases a day to 4,000-5,000 cases a day), and they indicated that they would be meeting today with the Senate General Government and Agency Advisory Review Council

ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. Virtual Meeting Resolution

MINUTES: NOVEMBER 9, 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

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

- 2021 Budget
 - Crowl – currently there is a 50-50 split of the cable franchise revenue between the General Fund and the Cable Access Fund – there was interest expressed last year about 100% of that revenue being placed solely into the General Fund – that did not happen in 2020 – brings up the question of financial support for various needs of The Government Channel (TGC)
 - Risner – believes retaining 50% of cable franchise funding for TGC continues to be necessary for purchases of software/equipment/training needs – the City does not want to fall behind in our communication sector – urged Council to keep this 50% revenue stream in the Cable Access Fund
 - Crowl – agrees – in this time of the pandemic the City has relied heavily on TGC to provide remote meeting availability to the public
 - Auditor – not in favor of putting all of the cable franchise fee into the General Fund, believes the funding should stay as is with the 50-50 split – there should be no issue with TGC spending Cable Access Funds for better communication software/equipment
 - Mayor – TGC needs to be sustainable and resilient as we have seen during this pandemic – TGC's role is invaluable in the City's communication efforts
 - Crowl – Council has received a draft of the 2021 Appropriation Ordinance
 - President – budgeted general revenue funds for 2021: \$16.7 million compared to last year's \$15.2 million; budget proprietary funds for 2021: \$34 million compared to last year's \$29.6 million; overall budget for 2021: \$50.7 million compared to last year's \$44.8 million
 - Auditor – is satisfied with the 2021 budget
 - Mayor – noted that capital outlay, outside of funded projects, is bare bones in this budget

-President – Council has received a draft of changes to be considered to the Non-Union Benefits Package – the changes are indicated in red – doesn't appear to be any major changes, only those providing clarification

-Mayor – 2021 staffing changes have been outlined in red and are mostly in the area of Arts, Parks & Recreation, realigning positions – added, there have been several retirements this year under COVID-19 and the City has not hired into those positions – moving into 2021 will likely not be rehiring into these positions – may need to reevaluate and revisit staffing mid-year on these unfilled positions

-Risner – asked how many non-union positions will be staffed in 2021

-Mayor – it is about 1/3 of the labor force

-President – total staffing for 2021 is 172

- SOPEC Grant

-Crowl – the City has partnered with AEP to bring an installation to our Water Treatment Plant that will provide some resilience at times of power outages – in the past the City has borrowed generators during serious electrical outages – this new installation will offer battery storage capability – the Southeast Ohio Public Energy Council (SOPEC) has approved a grant that will cover the City's match (\$28,167) for this sustainable feature

-Mayor – the City of Athens will be one of two test sites for this AEP pilot micro-grid system at our Water Treatment Plant, the other being the Columbus Zoo – AEP will have control over this system for the first two years in collecting data after which the City will acquire control of this backup battery system – agrees, this is a wonderful element of resilience for one of our most vital public assets, clean and safe drinking water

-Clodfelter – asked about the SOPEC grant

-Mayor – this grant is similar to those received for our solar lighting for the bus shelters, personal device charging station picnic tables, and hopefully soon free-standing solar operated street lights in locations where there currently is no power

- CARES Act (expense authorization)

-Crowl – a final detailed report has been received from Interim Service-Safety Director Pyle for Council approval for expenses related to the pandemic

-Clodfelter – is impressed by the level of detail for these critical purchases that were made related to COVID-19

-Mayor – there will likely be some slight adjustments with the two grants that were issued to HAPCAP – only \$7,062 of the \$25,000 was expended from the rent/mortgage relief funding, and HAPCAP only assisted two clients in the amount of \$732 of the \$75,000 under the City's utility program – he understands that the Governor released other funding dedicated to these same relief programs that will be made available to agencies like HAPCAP for these same services – the balance of these two grants will be reissued to the City for other uses related to COVID-19

-Smedley – thought the utility grant would have been better utilized – asked if there was adequate reach out to the community
-Mayor – the City worked closely with HAPCAP to identify individuals – time is of the essence to apply these monies where they can be used effectively

- Appropriations & Transfers

-Crowl – refund checks from BWC totaling \$503,789 need to be appropriated in the General Fund

-Mayor – noted that this year the City saw a substantial savings in healthcare costs

ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

- 1.** 2021 Appropriations
- 2.** 2021 Non-Union Benefits
- 3.** 2021 Staffing
- 4.** SOPEC Grant
- 5.** CARES Act
- 6.** Appropriation

MINUTES
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
NOVEMBER 9, 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

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

- LPA/State Project Agreement
 - Kotses – this is a request from ODOT District 10 for a painting project on US 50 and 33, about 1 and $\frac{3}{4}$ miles within the corporate limit – the cost is paid 100% by ODOT – timeline is March, 2021
 - Mayor Patterson – wished to clarify that the current paving being done on US 50/32 is a State project – he has received complaints

ITEMS NEEDED ON AN UPCOMING CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. LPA/State