

MINUTES
MAY 9, 2016
COMMITTEE-OF THE-WHOLE
7:00 p.m.

Council Members in Attendance: Kent Butler
Jennifer Cochran
Chris Fahl
Peter Kotses
Patrick McGee
Michele Papai
Jeff Risner

Administrators and/or
Other Elected Officials: President Knisely
Mayor Patterson
Service-Safety Director Horan Moseley

Items Discussed:

- Single-Use Bag
 - Cochran – this is an issue she and many residents have shown interest in, beginning with a public meeting of the Environment & Sustainability Commission – many have asked about a complete plastic bag ban, however she would like to look at other solutions that may be less confrontational – disposable bags have an impact on our environment, remaining in our landfill for at least a thousand years – they do not biodegrade, they photodegrade, and end up in our streams and rivers, and ultimately in the oceans – nationwide, recycling of plastic bags is only about 5% -- legislation has been enacted across the nation, beginning particularly along the west coast and now more recently on the east coast due to the large impact on the beaches and fish life – cities in 18 states have enacted ordinances – the proposed legislation will have a phased in impact for our retailers – we could potentially be the first in Ohio to make this progressive step – the ordinance would involve a fee, not a tax, to promote positive behavior change – many consumers already have a collection of reusable cloth tote bags that we often times forget to bring with us when shopping, but a fee may add the incentive we need to remember our bags, and if not then we can purchase one for \$.10 – let's work to reduce bag litter/waste and promote a cleaner, safer environment for all of us
 - Elissa Yoder, Conservation Coordinator for the Central Ohio Sierra Club – due to ocean currents and winds there are seven areas on our planet where debris and trash naturally collects with a high concentration of

plastic that then becomes part of the food chain – plastic bags kill about one million seabirds, 100,000 turtles, and 400,000 mammals per year – the Ocean Conservancy recently released a study that by the year 2050, plastic will outweigh fish pound for pound – this is a staggering statistic – what kind of future is that for the ocean? – statistics show that recycling is not working to decrease the plastic bag use – the \$.10 fee is a negative consequence that may increase the use of reusable bags – there are approximately 150 cities in the U.S. (20 million Americans) that address plastic bag use – Boulder, Colorado recently approved a \$.10 bag fee that reduced their plastic bag usage by 68% in six months

-Papai – of the approximately 150 cities, how many have legislation with all out bans

-Yoder – not too many, mostly just the negative consequence of charging for a bag

-Butler – noted that Washington, D.C. enacted legislation and saw a 60% reduction in their plastic bag usage and New York City recently approved such legislation – there are models of success already in place

-McGee – asked if there are cities that charge a fee in excess of \$.10

-Yoder – a higher fee is typically a long-range goal if consumers become complacent with paying the smaller fee

-Cochran – in her research, cities charge a range of fees from as low as \$.05 to as high as \$1.00

-Kotses – asked about any educational component to help encourage consumers to use single-use bags

-Yoder – initial outreach and long-term education is very helpful

-Cochran – educational efforts are already underway in the Athens community as part of the Ohio University sustainability film series – there are many outlets for educational opportunities in Athens, including our very own Government Channel for public service announcements – there will be a six-month lead-in time for businesses to prepare – this will also allow time for signage and bag give-a-ways

-Fahl – consumers may believe the bag fee is a windfall for the businesses

-Cochran – some city fees are split between the retailer and the government entity – the proposed legislation will have language that limits the use of the fee

-Mayor – is concerned about record keeping in terms of oversight and accountancy

-S-S Director – asked about exemptions for persons receiving aid from Job & Family Services

-Cochran – government funded, social service recipients will be provided bags at no cost – not intended for this to be a hardship on folks

-S-S Director – would prefer to begin with a fee of \$.05

-Risner – questioned whether the fee being collected and relevant data would be considered a public record

-S-S Director – will check with the Law Director

-Papai – seems like a review of policies already established in other cities with similar ordinances could answer a lot of questions

-Cochran – clarified that the proposed ordinance is for any type of single-use bag, it is not exclusive to plastic

- Income Tax Increase

-President – currently the City has a 1.65% income tax, with 1.4% to the General Fund, .10% to Street Rehabilitation, .10% to the Community Center, and .05% for Community Center Operations

-Mayor – see attached graphs representing Local Government Funds 2005-2015 and OU Enrollment 1986-2015 – staffing and services have not matched that level of growth and have been stretched thinner each year – he is proposing a .20% increase from 1.65% to 1.85% -- Kent and Oxford, Ohio are both at 2%, and have been for a while – other comparable cities in Ohio range from 1.7% up to 2% -- also, the City of Athens has grown in size over this 30-year span through annexation and private land donations for recreational use (see attached), to ORC mandated management and maintenance of cemeteries within the corporate limits, as well as growth in the rental market, requiring Code Enforcement inspections

-Fahl – declining support from the State Local Government Funds, and the loss of Estate Tax, as well as new State income tax mandates have forced many of Ohio's municipalities to seek an income tax levy – requesting this levy is the only responsible way the City can continue to provide efficient services

-Risner – clarified that City Council is not raising taxes, it is simply asking that an increase be placed on the November ballot to be voted on by the electorate – residents will make this decision

-Butler – acknowledged that former Mayor Wiehl, at the end of his term, recommended the need to seek an increase in the income tax – he also mentioned the State Impact Fee paid to college towns has been declining

as well – noted that City purchases to provide services, i.e., costs for road salt, asphalt, fuel, utilities, sanitation, etc. have dramatically increased since 1986

-Papai – agrees with earlier comments that local funding models are changing, and this proposed increase in our income tax will help us maintain our current services

-President – asked how much revenue a .20% increase would generate

-Mayor – approximately \$1.3 million annually

-President – clarified that this income tax does not affect non-taxable income such as capital gains, dividends, interest, pensions, social security and unemployment or welfare benefits

-McGee – need to focus on street maintenance, which is the number one complaint he receives, and he believes citizens will be pleased that this increase will provide additional funding for street repair

- CDBG

-Mayor – possible projects being considered include: Jefferson Avenue repaving, West Union Street sidewalk expansion, and supplement cost of Kimes Reservoir repairs

-S-S Director – smaller projects are more fitting – a public hearing will be held to consider other projects brought forward by the public – projects must benefit low-moderate income areas

- Appropriations

-Mayor -- \$11,000 to General Fund for City Building HVAC Improvements to the first floor conference room, Treasurer's office, and IT Server room – these would be singular, more efficient units; \$18,000 to General Fund, Code Enforcement, professional services, to cover temporary clerical support while an employee is on extended medical leave; \$500 to General Fund, Code Enforcement, for purchase of a tool set; \$60,000 to Garbage Fund for a second Solid Waste Control Inspector; and to decrease General Fund, Police, T.C. 100 by \$22,500 and increase T.C. 500 by \$15,000, and T.C. 200-300, by \$7500, to purchase a new vehicle for their current criminal investigations unit, repurpose the old one, and upgrade the (Speed Awareness Monitors) SAM units

ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. Single-Use Bags
2. Income Tax Increase
3. Appropriations

MINUTES
MAY 9, 2016
CITY & SAFETY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Members in Attendance: Kent Butler, Chair
Jennifer Cochran, Vice-Chair
Peter Kotses, Member

Other Council Members: Chris Fahl
Patrick McGee
Michele Papai
Jeff Risner

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ITEMS DISCUSSED:

- Handheld Water Meter Readers (disposal)
 - Butler – the two older readers will be used as trade-in value on two newer models

- Solar-Powered Refuse Compaction Containers (Big Belly)
 - Butler – Garbage Fund has funds available – will enter into a lease agreement for \$50,000 per year, to include equipment, maintenance, and telemetry service for approximately 24 units – currently there are no recycling containers on Court Street

 - Mayor – these compaction containers will decrease the number of containers on the street from about 50 to 24 – the cost per unit is approximately \$2000 – each unit will house a box for landfill trash and one for mixed recycling

 - Papai – just recently had an opportunity to see these containers being used in New York City and took note that the area around the containers was clean and free of litter, unlike our current lidless containers – she understands from earlier discussions that the Garbage Fund balance is healthy and can handle this additional expenditure

 - Mayor – the current 760 Fund balance is about \$1.2 million

 - Fahl – acknowledged that the City will see a cost savings and benefit with these new containers

 - McGee – emphasized that he is not opposed to this idea, however is concerned about the expense at this time

-Mayor – reminded McGee that this is a proprietary fund line, and the monies can only be used to fund garbage/recycling related activities – this is a step in the right direction to cut down on some of the litter unsightliness, to promote a cleaner uptown area

-Cochran – in the near future, would like to address modifying our pay as you throw fee structure – if customers can realize a savings through recycling that will help our waste reduction efforts

-Mayor – keep in mind that tipping fees could escalate at any time – need to be cautious with plans to reduce our fee structure

-Kotses – asked about the growth of the Garbage Fund and whether this new system will significantly impact the Fund whereby it may begin to decline instead of showing steady growth

-Mayor – should have minimal impact

ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. Disposal
2. Solar-Powered Receptacles