

Council Members in attendance via videoconference: Clodfelter, Crowl, Fahl, Grace, Kotses, Risner and Smedley.

Also present via videoconference: President Knisely and Mayor Patterson.

Council Member Grace opened the second of two Public Hearings to discuss the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). If funding is received, the City's top priority project is for west side accessibility improvements on West Washington and Shafer Streets, to include lighting improvements.

Clodfelter agrees that making accessibility improvements would benefit our citizens, but hopes that improving the lighting on West Washington Street in particular, and hopefully on Shafer, will be a core part of the project.

Grace segued this grant discussion into a reminder to all citizens to complete the 2020 Census. Census counts are vital for grant funded projects.

Mayor Patterson indicated that last week, in the less densely student populated areas, the City has a 40-50% response rate, with student precincts ranging from 25-35%.

President Knisely noted that the City is eligible for up to \$150,000 for this CDBG grant.

Hearing no further questions or comments from meeting participants, and receiving no questions or comments from the public via attendees joining our zoom meeting or via email, the hearing was adjourned at approximately 7:05 p.m.

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President of Council

ATTEST:

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Clerk of Council

**ATHENS CITY COUNCIL: REGULAR SESSION, MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2020, 7:00 P.M.**

Athens City Council met in Regular Session at the above hour. Due to concerns with COVID-19 the following members met via videoconference: Clodfelter, Crowl, Fahl, Kotses, Grace, Risner and Smedley.

Also present via videoconference: President Knisely, Mayor Patterson, and Law Director Eliason.

**DISPOSITION OF MINUTES:**

Risner moved approval of the minutes of the Regular Session held April 6, 2020; Crowl seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

**Council Member Crowl** reminded everyone that the Auditor-Mayor meetings continue to be held each Tuesday at 3:00 p.m., now being held online during the COVID-19 crises, and at times there is a quorum of the Finance & Personnel Committee members in attendance.

**REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS FROM OTHER ELECTED OFFICIALS:**

Mayor Patterson reported the following:

- Two dumpsters are available at the Service Garage on West State Street for residents to discard unwanted items during spring cleanup week. The gate will be open 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- During off-campus student move-in/move-out, the City will be deploying several dumpsters throughout the high density areas. A message has been delivered through Ohio University's Off-Campus Student Housing Office as well as through landlords that students take the majority of their belongings home with them, typically they leave behind furniture. Canned goods and nonperishable items can be donated to the food pantry. Habitat for Humanity will not pick up, but will allow drop-off of re-usable items at their West Union Street location, or at their facility in Chauncey.
- Provided a COVID Regional Update from Ken Johnson, DO, and Chief Medical Affairs Officer at Ohio University that is critical to the influx of students returning to campus for move-out/move-in during the April 24 through May 10 timeframe, during the projected peak of the virus. The Mayor asked the City's permanent residents to consider purchasing groceries and other sundry items prior to May 1<sup>st</sup>, and to exercise extra caution in protecting themselves during this time.

## **ORDINANCES FOR SECOND READING:**

### **0-52-20**

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A GRANT AGREEMENT WITH THE NORTHEAST OHIO PUBLIC ENERGY COUNCIL (NOPEC) IN ORDER TO ACCEPT NOPEC ENERGIZED COMMUNITY (NEC) GRANT(S).

### **0-54-20**

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE SERVICE-SAFETY DIRECTOR TO ADVERTISE AND ACCEPT BIDS, WHERE NECESSARY, FOR CONSTRUCTION AND CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING OF THE STIMSON AVENUE IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT (#315).

## **ORDINANCES FOR FIRST READING:**

### **0-56-20**

AN ORDINANCE TO ENSURE LOCAL MATCH FUNDS FOR THE MOBILITY MANAGER GRANT.

### **0-57-20**

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE SERVICE-SAFETY DIRECTOR TO ENTER INTO A WATER AGREEMENT WITH THE LE-AX REGIONAL WATER DISTRICT TO RELEASE, UPON ANNEXATION, CERTAIN PROPERTY WITHIN THEIR SERVICE AREA TO THE CITY OF ATHENS.

### **0-58-20**

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE SERVICE-SAFETY DIRECTOR TO ENTER INTO A TEMPORARY RIGHT OF ENTRY AGREEMENT WITH KIMES CONVALESCENT CENTER, LTD., AS PART OF THE KIMES RESERVOIR PROJECT (#324); AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. Grace moved for Suspension of the Rules as this agreement is needed prior to moving forward with the project, and in order to meet project completion grant deadlines; Risner seconded. Suspension of the Rules was approved unanimously. Grace moved for Adoption; Fahl seconded. Adoption was approved unanimously.

### **0-59-20**

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE 2020 APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE.

### **0-60-20**

AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE SERVICE-SAFETY DIRECTOR TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT FOR MUNICIPAL REFUSE RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING. Discussion: Cowl indicated that the costs for these services has increased. He is recommending including curbside composting as part of this contract in order to keep methane gas producing organic waste out of the landfill. He noted that the recycling fee has been required of all residents, for

decades now, to encourage as many citizens as possible to engage in this service. The composting fee will be the same. Many residents are interested in an affordable composting service. The cost per month with all residents in the City paying for this service, will be approximately \$3.00. He emphasized that it is not just the addition of composting that has increased the cost of the solid waste contract.

He understands the impact the COVID-19 crisis is having on our residents, and that this increase is coming forward at a very bad time. The City Auditor has been requested to look into the current balance of the Garbage Fund to see if the cost increases can be subsidized by the City until January 1, 2021.

Fahl pointed out that many people only have one small bag of garbage weekly and are required to pay the same base rate as those who have filled a 32-gallon container. Everybody pays because it is a public service for the public good.

Kotses questions increasing rates to add composting during this extremely challenging time. While he agrees with encouraging composting for a sustainable future, maybe curbside implementation could be delayed a while longer.

Resident Laurie McKnight commented that given the overall rate increase for the solid waste contract, she doesn't believe it is advisable at this time to add the curbside composting service. She, too, understands the importance of composting, however she doesn't feel that with our community's current high rate of unemployment due to COVID 19, that this is the time.

Resident Raymie McKerrow requested information on the composting process and associated fee.

Clodfelter responded that during the compost pilot program, that was subsidized by the City, the resident was provided a 5-gallon bucket with a tight-fitting lid, along with instructions on accepted materials for composting. The composting is then collected along with your garbage and recycling on your pickup day. She noted that composting did reduce the volume of garbage she placed curbside.

Crowl indicated that the solid waste contract with AHRC, the lowest bidder, is for almost \$1.7 million annually, and composting represents about \$140,000 of the contract cost. He stressed that there are increases in the contract unrelated to composting.

Mayor Patterson reported that the current unappropriated balance in the Garbage Fund is approximately \$151,000, and the current appropriation is \$1.6 million. He is truly sympathetic that these rate increases are happening at the worst possible time. He will work with the Auditor to explore other options.

Grace's preference is to include composting in the contract as it is the best for our environment. The cost per household is approximately \$3.00 per month.

The City does have a pay as you throw system in place; you pay less for having only one container. The overall goal is to reduce solid waste being sent to the landfill which is where we have many environmental problems. Through recycling and composting many more households will be able to go to a one container system and pay a lower rate.

Currently, garbage containers are purchased by the homeowner and they can range from 30-60 gallon containers. To be more equitable, the City could purchase 35-gallon containers, much like the blue recycling containers, and provide them to each residential address. He has heard from many residents who are interested in having equitable containers. It was decided at this time not to include that service within the new rates because of the concerns over the increases.

Fahl stated that reducing the amount of compostable waste in the City's garbage stream will also help to reduce the amount of money spent at the landfill. The more the City can divert from the landfill the less cost there will be in tipping fees.

Crowl responded that the tipping fees in 2019 went up by 8%.

Clodfelter noted that the landfill used in our area is private, so the City has no control over those increased costs at the dump.

Smedley hears all of the points about the value of composting and the need to divert our trash in that way. She also hears the concerns about the financial impact the rate increases will have on our residents. Trash and recycling you cannot do on your own, but composting you can, for free. Certainly, at a different time, she would be ready to add curbside composting. Given our current circumstances she is interested to hear what the Mayor finds out about the possibility of postponing the increased rates.

Resident Heather Laughlin commented that she is against these rate increases as they are unaffordable by many Athens' residents. With the recent water, sewer and school tax increases Council needs to consider that many of its constituents cannot afford such increases.

Crowl indicated that one of the proposals for this contract includes a 25% deduction for residents over the age of 65 and on fixed incomes.

### **0-61-20**

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ATHENS CITY CODE TITLE 1, GENERAL PROVISIONS, CHAPTER 1.03, CODE FEES ESTABLISHED, SOLID WASTE, RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING RATES. Discussion: Crowl reported that the City has charged a recycling support fee of \$3.50 for each household since 2010. Also in 2010, the rates were increased to \$6.50 for one container and \$12.00 for two containers. The current rate for one container, \$6.50, plus the \$3.50 for

recycling has been in place since 2010. The City is requesting this be increased from \$10.00 to \$16.00 that also includes an approximate fee of \$3.00 for composting. Two containers per week will increase from \$15.50 to \$26.50. Again, the overall solid waste contract has increased, therefore, current rates will need to be increased by \$3.00 to cover those costs. The City is proposing an additional \$3.00 to include a new curbside composting program. Rates are increasing in rental units, based upon occupancy, extra bag charges from \$3.00 to \$5.00, to cover additional contract expenses, but also to encourage fewer extra bags of solid waste going to the landfill. Special haul rates are increasing from \$25.00 for up to 4 cubic yards, to a charge of \$15.00 per cubic yard.

Risner is really concerned about raising the rates at this time. He knows it is necessary, but would like Council to consider increasing the rates by 1/3 each year of this contract beginning January, 2021.

Kotses is cognizant of the current situation and the need for some modification.

Clodfelter shares Risner and Kotses' concerns with increasing rates at this time. Stepping the increase in gradually would be helpful.

Crowl agrees as well. City Council has options it can consider.

Grace concurs it is a horrible time to raise rates for our residents, however, this is an essential public service. Composting could be removed to reduce the amount a bit, but understands the need for some rate increase to cover the general contract. There are going to be many long-term impacts from COVID-19 and the City will be faced with many financial implications for quite some time. The City must be able to cover its expenses in a time of revenue decreases. Now is not the time to be offsetting the cost of this contract, so need to consider meeting the needs of a basic general contract.

Mayor Patterson emphasized that the cost of the contract must be covered from the Garbage Fund. He will go back to the drawing board and look at the cost of a bare minimum increase until January, 2021.

Risner believes the funds for this contract are already appropriated, \$1.6 million, in the Garbage Fund for this year. If the rate increases can be postponed until January, 2021, and then raise them each year of the contract by 1/3 of the proposed, it seems there would be enough to cover the current contract amount. We would need \$100,000 per year, so it seems doable.

Crowl hears that residents understand a modest increase may be needed, but that now is not the time to add composting. In the long-run City curbside

composting meets a lot of our goals, but he understands that these are unique times and the rates will continue to be discussed.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS & OTHER BUSINESS:**

Risner moved to Accept the Auditor's March, 2020, Financial Report; Fahl seconded. Motion was approved unanimously.

Clodfelter reminded everyone that the deadline for voting in the Primary Election is April 28<sup>th</sup>. She encouraged residents to send their application for a ballot early in order to ensure their ballot will arrive on time. Also, there is a drop box for both applications and ballots in the rear of the Board of Elections office.

At approximately 8:25 p.m. Fahl moved to Adjourn the meeting; Crowl seconded, and the meeting was adjourned.

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President of Council

ATTEST:

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Clerk of Council