

**MINUTES**  
**APRIL 27, 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  
Auditor Hecht

**Items Discussed:**

- Solid Waste (rates)
  - Crowl – noted that even without the inclusion of composting in this new contract, the regular service rates have increased and the City will need to capture those costs by increasing rates for services already being received – he has discovered from some of the communication he is receiving that it is not clear what the environmental impact that having organic food waste in our landfill has on the earth – the major impetus of providing curbside composting is to keep the organic matter out of landfills – estimates are that up to 20% of the methane gases that are produced, due to humans, comes from landfills – this landfill practice creates an anaerobic environment (absence of oxygen) – with the absence of oxygen, the biodegradation of food waste attracts a certain type of bacteria (microbes) that grows in an area without oxygen – those microbes produce the methane gas that is released into the atmosphere – as a greenhouse gas, methane is much more dangerous than carbon dioxide – many large cities, many entire countries, have been looking at ways to separate organic matter from their refuse – composting has some similarities to recycling, in that it is a product with value, and one that doesn't have to be put into the landfill; it could be a circular part of the economy – AHRC, a non-profit, takes into consideration what they are able to make by selling the collected recycling, and we as residents can then pay a lower fee – similarly, through curbside composting our food waste will be collected, processed, and turned into a soil amendment that can be sold to create additional revenue, much like the recycling, that will lower AHRC's operational costs, and then those savings can

be passed on to residents – AHRC is also looking into a process called bio-digestion whereby a facility could be built that would capture the methane gases from the food waste and turn it into a viable fuel source that could then be used to power AHRC – the City’s Environment & Sustainability Commission, of which he is a member, proposes this initiative to help with climate change – that is why curbside composting has been included as an alternate in the AHRC contract – this is an approximately \$140,000 expense that will be passed along to each account as a support fee, like that of recycling, whether used or not, and there will be an approximate \$3.29 monthly increase for this service – he realizes this is an additional expense coming at a really inopportune time, and those are the strongest voices he is hearing; this is not the time to be adding additional services – this is important to consider

-Smedley – understands and appreciates the science, but hesitates implementing curbside composting at this time

-Fahl – agrees, composting can be added at a later date, but it should be added to help address climate emergency – hopes the rate increases that are needed for the contract can be stepped in gradually

-Clodfelter – truly understands this is a difficult time for our residents – she, too, hopes the trash and recycling rates can be stepped in over time – she is also hearing strong support for including the curbside composting at this time

-Kotses – he cannot stress enough that this is not a good time to increase service rates – understands that curbside composting would be a valuable service, but doesn’t believe it is something that is needed right now – now is a time to be conservative – he is not in favor, at this time, of enacting an additional economic burden on our residents

-Grace – asked if it is possible to modify the contract to delay curbside composting until July, 2021

-Crowl – because the composting service was an alternate to the bid, he believes implementation can occur at a later date

-Fahl – need to find a balance between the financial concerns of our residents at this time and the community’s environmental impact of organic food waste and its effects on climate change

-Alan Swank, resident – it is a very difficult financial time for our residents working in the private sector – suggested the City ask AHRC to extend the current contract for at least six months, if not a year – this contract includes language for solid waste, recycling, composting and standardized waste containers – more time is needed to discuss all available options

-Crowl – would be good and equitable for the City to institute standardized waste containers – he supports that as well but, again, it comes at an additional cost – this option has been pulled at this time to keep the increase in fees a bit lower  
-Mayor – clarified that there are no extensions available under the previous contract with AHRC

-Grace – even if an extension was possible, it is unlikely that the extension would come without a cost increase

-Risner – keeping in mind the impact that rate increases at this time will have on our residents, he believes the City should proceed cautiously – he also understands that due to the pandemic the City's revenue streams moving forward are also unknown – and the City's balance in the Garbage Fund is just over \$100,000

-Crowl – responded, that if the rates are not increased the City will have to subsidize the contract

-Grace – would like guidance from the Mayor and Auditor on options for stepping in the increases – what is possible

-Auditor – there are few revenue sources for the Garbage Fund and has Risner pointed out, this fund has subsidized costs over the last few years that have depleted the City's reserve

-Mayor – need to keep in mind that this new contract is for \$1,682,692 of which only \$1,600,000 has been appropriated in the Garbage Fund

-Grace – asked about the cost of the standardized containers

-Crowl – \$25,000 upfront capital cost and \$100,000 annually at \$2.00 per month per container

-Clodfelter – not sure this is the best time to offer standardized containers – more important to offer the environmental benefits of curbside composting

-Kotses – asked about renewal of the Big Belly contract, noting that it is \$50,000 annually out of the Garbage Fund

-Mayor – believes the City is in the third year of a 5-year agreement – benefit of the Big Belly is what is being diverted from the landfill – well worth the diversion rate of 36 to 39%

- Baileys Trail System

-Mayor – the Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia (ORCA) has received notification that the Forest Service National Partnership Office, through two funding sources, a \$350,000 grant is available – there is a 20% local match – the City's share would be about \$35,000 if the County Commissioners pay half – the City's match could come from the Athens Enhancement Fund – it is important to note that these are not taxpayer dollars – this fund cannot be used for wages or benefits, only for projects – this would add about 10 miles of mountain bike trail –

he believes this is an appropriate use of this fund line, and that it this is worth strong consideration

-Risner – asked about any geographical restrictions – using it outside the corporate limits

-Mayor – precedent has already been set – Ed Maps was headquartered outside the City – in 2012-2013, \$90,000 was used to subsidize Athens Public Transit

-Smedley – asked about plans that may already be in place for these funds, and about the timeframe for the grant

-Mayor – there are no other plans at this time – he is exploring trail maintenance, step repair and bridge work at Camp Rotan – need to continue to be good stewards to this land that was donated to the City by the Athens Rotary – he will check on the grant timeline

-Grace – asked about the balance of the Enhancement Fund

-Auditor -- \$116,900

- General Election (resolution)

-Fahl – would like Council to approve a resolution supporting planning for a safe, free and fair election in November during this time of COVID-19, citing fully accessible online registration with extended deadlines, expanded early and absentee voting to include mail-in ballots to every registered voter

## **ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:**

1. General Election (resolution)

**MINUTES**  
**FINANCE & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**  
**APRIL 27, 2020**  
**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  
Auditor Hecht  
EPW Director Heady

**ITEMS DISCUSSED:**

- Stimson Avenue (project funding)
  - Crowl – legislation is needed to accept bids, appropriate funds, authorize the expenditure and enter into a contract, authorize an application and enter into an agreement for a State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) loan, and to enter into a contracts for the relocation of utilities – this is the City’s opportunity to rebuild Stimson, the first time in 50 years – the street carries over 7,000 cars per day – the roadway is at the end of its useful life and the infrastructure needs to be upgraded – the Stimson-East State intersection is dangerous with many pedestrian/vehicle crossings – poles for overhead utility lines limit accessibility for pedestrians and Fire Department access, and are a safety concern for travelers – part of this project is to place these utilities underground – this project will allow Stimson to become a “complete” street in terms of pedestrian facility upgrades, lighting improvements, landscaping, water and sewer upgrades from East Street to 1804 Way at the roundabout – the City has been awarded an Ohio Small Cities grant in the amount of (\$2,126,815) – a contract must be in place by June 10 in order to guarantee the award of these funds – additional funds expected to assist with the project cost include: an Ohio Public Works grant (\$400,000); along with a 0 percent loan in the amount of (\$400,000), pending passage of the State of Ohio Capital Spending Bill; and Ohio Department of Transportation Safety funds in the amount of (\$500,000) – if received, these will reduce the amount of money needed from the SIB loan – the total project cost is (\$7,819,019)
  - Mayor – also plan to apply for Transportation Improvement District funds, for up to (\$250,000) with a 25% local match

-Heady – clarified that if these grant amounts are awarded, the SIB loan can be reduced from \$5 million to \$3.4 or \$3.7 million – added, the new water lines will be upsized from 6” to 12”, storm sewer from 12” to 24”, a new sanitary line from a 5” clay tile to 8” plastic pipe, as well as a duct bank for all of the telecom utilities – this is a very comprehensive project

-Risner – asked about the location of any future microcells in the area  
-Heady – in the design standards small cell will be required to co-locate on the new light poles – adding fiber lines should facilitate 5G

-Crowl – noted that the SIB loan is zero interest for 12 months, and the first payment is not due until 30 months

-Heady – commented that the utility relocations with Columbia Gas and AEP will occur late summer into fall – no major street work will begin until February next year – should not have any large bills from the contractor until 2021, with no loan payment for 2 ½ years

- Closing Statement

-Mayor Patterson – during the upcoming Ohio University Off-Campus student move-out weekend he strongly encouraged and recommended Athens’ residents continue to shelter in-place and distance themselves from the influx of people coming in from across and outside the state – get through these next couple of weekends safely

## **ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:**

1. Stimson Project