

MINUTES
MAY 11, 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 – a fair amount of citizen input has been received regarding the addition of composting as a citywide curbside service – the Far East Side Neighborhood Association (FENA) requested Council consider three specific items:
 - 1) renegotiate the terms of the contract with the lowest and best bidder, Athens-Hocking Recycling Center (AHRC) – the Law Director has indicated that it is not possible to renegotiate the terms of a contract that has been through the bidding process;
 - 2) to amend the Ordinance to remove composting as a requested service, and to remove it from the Ordinance to increase the rates – the Law Director has indicated that because this is a 3-year contract, if the City should decide to remove the composting service, that would need to be for the duration of the contract;
 - 3) spend some time examining more closely the need and the benefit of composting in the City of Athens – valuable data has been provided by Rural Action through a survey of Athens’ residents – a pilot program was offered, and Rural Action kept records of those who participated in the pilot program – Council Members could consider, given the current COVID-19 crisis, delaying the composting fee until January, 2021
 - Smedley – questioned whether the City’s current composting could continue as is
 - Bruce Underwood, Executive Director of AHRC, commented that if the City does not move forward with citywide curbside composting, the AHRC Board of Directors would like to continue to provide the service as is, if at all possible –

AHRC is willing to work with the City within the current bounds of the proposed contract – there are currently 150-160 participating in curbside composting at the \$20.65 rate

-Kotses – if the rate increase for composting does not go into effect until January, 2020, how much impact will that have on the Garbage Fund

-Crowl – the annual contract cost for composting will be \$139,000, so half would be \$69,500 through December, 2020 – there is a balance of \$83,000 in the Garbage Fund

-Kotses – added, if the public ever needed a break, it is right now

-Risner – agrees with Kotses – he would like consideration to postpone composting – he would also like to amend the rate increase Ordinance to eliminate the 5% above breakeven and factor those increases to the breakeven model

-Smedley – asked for clarification on whether Risner means postponing the composting fee until January, or postponing composting for this contract period

-Risner – would be interested in possibly a separate contract for composting in 2021

-Crowl – cost for a separate contract would likely be at a much higher cost, and, if private, would not have the environmental impact the City would like to achieve through a municipal program

-Grace – is concerned about setting the fees to the breakeven level, especially if the fund is depleted by delaying implementation of the fees – the City is also moving forward in a time of financial uncertainty

-Auditor – the Garbage Fund needs to support itself – breakeven can work if all contract expenses can be met with the customer service rates that are in place – can monitor how breakeven works for the first full year of the contract

-Fahl – suggested a phasing-in of composting

-Smedley – her inclination is to agree with Risner to move forward with the breakeven option at this time

-Clodfelter – would like to stay with the 5% above breakeven rates in order to provide a 25% discount to those that can be identified as “in need” – is also in favor of the City covering the cost of composting until January, 2021

-Risner – there is so much financial uncertainty, need to be cautious – would like to take the most conservative action in asking for rate increases – still hopes to proceed with the breakeven, and keep the fund well monitored – incremental changes may need to be made, but not now

-Smedley – agrees, there is just so much financial uncertainty now and into the future – any other time she would have no hesitation in supporting the 5% over breakeven and citywide curbside composting – in the face of this uncertainty we need to pause and reevaluate the impact these actions will have on our residents – she still strongly feels that it would be prudent to go with the breakeven rates and reevaluate composting, with the caveat that it is coming to the City of Athens, but now is not the time

-Mayor – need to be certain that the City has the minimum needed to pay the contract

-Clodfelter – again, the 5% above breakeven could also be used to help offset any loss in revenue that may in turn be needed to cover the cost of the contract

-Crowl – there has been some discussion with residents about an opt-in or an opt-out compost program, but it does not appear that is allowable by the way the bid for services was requested, and would be renegotiating the terms of the contract

MINUTES: MAY 11, 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
Auditor Hecht
EPW Director Heady

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

- Appropriations/Transfers
 - Crowl – the following appropriations have been requested:
 - \$333,000 to the Water Fund to provide for two 2020 loan payments due on our Water Treatment Plant Improvements – this amount will then need to be transferred from the Water Fund into the Water Debt Fund and then appropriated into the Water Debt Fund for payment
 - \$28,300 to the Community Center Phase II Fund to complete the funding needed for replacement of the chiller compressor
 - Auditor – added the following:
 - \$40,000 to the APR Income Tax Fund to pay costs associated with the Community Center – this amount will then need to be transferred to the Community Center Fund
 - Smedley – questioned whether this amount will be enough to cover expenses during the closure of the Center due to COVID-19
 - Auditor – the Community Center Director is still looking at ways to bring in revenue
 - Smedley – asked if the Center pursued the pandemic license for childcare
 - Mayor – does not believe that has been done – adding that a lot of the programming is on hold waiting for the Governor’s State Reopening Plan
 - Smedley – highly recommends, if we meet the criteria, trying to get the pandemic license for childcare – as businesses begin to reopen people will need that
 - Mayor – will touch base with Director Moore

ITEMS NEEDED ON THE NEXT CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. Appropriations/Transfers

MINUTES
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
MAY 11, 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
Auditor Hecht
EPW Director Robert Heady

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

- ODOT Small Cities Program Funds
 - Kotses – EPW has requested authorization to apply and enter into agreement for ODOT Small Cities Program funds – will be applying for \$2 million for construction year 2024 for a single-lane roundabout at the intersection of Union and St. Rt. 682 that is designed to handle the volume of traffic (8,000-10,000) vehicles per day – added, the West Union Street Improvements Project is scheduled to take place in 2022
 - Clodfelter – asked what fund is used for this type of project
 - Heady – the Street Rehabilitation Fund – there is a local match and approximately \$200,000 for design and engineering
 - Smedley – believes there is strong public support for a roundabout at this intersection
 - Fahl – agrees, a roundabout at this location will be muchly appreciated by many
 - President – there have been 32 crashes at this intersection in the last year, 18 of which had property damage and 14 had injuries
 - Mayor – these Small Cities grants are predicated on a population of less than 25,000 – the City of Athens could surpass that with the ongoing 2020 Census Count – he urged everyone to be enumerated – with a bad undercount the City may not exceed 25,000

- Street Levy (renewal)
 - Kotses – this (0.10%) 10-year renewal levy was first supported by the voters in 2001 and again in 2010 – this income tax brings in about \$900,000 annually – this funding is used for street projects of which many streets have benefitted

 - President – clarified that this tax would be \$10.00 per \$10,000 of income

 - Fahl – stressed that this is a renewal, not an increase in taxes, but a continuation of the same

 - Heady – noted that often times this tax is used to leverage federal dollars for larger projects – could be a \$2 million improvement that the City would match using only \$100,000 of City funding – many municipalities struggle to get these grants due to a lack of local match dollars – by voting in support of this levy the citizens of Athens have been forward-thinking that has allowed 38 large projects that includes the widening of East State Street, bridge repairs, and annual repaving

 - Auditor – clarified that the Street Rehabilitation Fund can only be used for street improvements

 - Kotses – thanked the citizens of Athens for recognizing for two decades this important component of funding our many street projects

ITEMS NEEDED ON AN UPCOMING CITY COUNCIL AGENDA:

1. ODOT Small Cities Program Funds
2. Street Levy (renewal)