

Video Conference
Regular Meeting
June 8, 2020
7:00 p.m.

Council met via video conference in regular session with all nine members present: Phillips, Payne, Nickerson, Tatman, Lewis, Gillum, Shoemaker, Corcoran and Proehl. Also, in attendance were Mayor Feeney, City Law Director Villarreal, and City Auditor Spetnagel. This meeting was video conferenced due to the COVID-19 pandemic and followed the guidelines of the Ohio Attorney General, Dave Yost, allowing the public to listen to the meeting safely.

Ms. Payne moved and Ms. Nickerson seconded that the minutes of the regular meeting of May 26, 2020 be accepted and approved, as submitted by the Clerk. All members present voted “yea”, except for Mr. Shoemaker who abstained due to his absence from the prior meeting, and President Arnold declared the motion adopted.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Safety Service Committee:

Ms. Gillum reported that the Safety Service Committee had a couple of items on the agenda, Item #3, which is accepting and appropriating \$1,410.02 in insurance funds received by the Chillicothe Fire Department for the repair of a planter that was damaged in a vehicle accident. Ms. Gillum stated that at the appropriate time she will request to waive the three-read rule, seeking to pass this item tonight. Ms. Gillum also requested that Item #1, which is on the agenda for its third reading, regarding appropriating funds for the new fire station at 40-50 Centennial Boulevard be committed to a future date. She stated that due to the present circumstances she and the committee felt it was in the City’s best interest to wait to pass this legislation. Ms. Gillum made a motion to commit Item #1 until a future date and Ms. Payne seconded the motion. All nine members present voted “yea” and President Arnold declared the motion adopted.

Engineering Committee

Mr. Shoemaker reported that the Engineering Committee had one item that was on the agenda, Item #2, which is appropriating \$31,000.00 for the installation of two electric vehicle charging stations on the City lot located at 32 East Water Street. He stated that cost for these charging stations is reimbursable through an AEP grant. Mr. Shoemaker stated that at the appropriate time he will request to waive the three-read rule, seeking to pass this item tonight. Mr. Shoemaker also stated that his committee will be working on the parking meter legislation for a future City Council meeting.

Development Committee:

Ms. Nickerson reported that the Development Committee had Item #4 on the agenda which is authorizing the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$7,283.00 as participating local funds for the Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission on behalf of the City of Chillicothe, Ohio, for fiscal year 2021. Ms. Nickerson stated that at the appropriate time she will request to waive the three-read rule, seeking to pass this item tonight.

REPORTS OF OFFICIALS

Report of Mayor Feeney:

Mayor Feeney said that he would like to make a few comments on the legislation. He stated that he understands Council’s reluctance to vote on Item #1 tonight. He stated that given everything that is going in the world, the perception of appropriating \$149,000 right now is probably the wrong message to send. He did say that because of the steps that Chief Creed took to set this money aside over the past three years, he is glad that they took the initiative to commit the legislation and not table it. He believes that when Council is comfortable, they will find that the money is there and it is dedicated and has been set aside over the last three years to design this money. All things considered Mayor Feeney thinks it makes sense to just take a moment to pause on that while we try to figure out the rest of our finances out. He supports the decision and at the same time he supports the efforts that Chief Creed has put in. He stated that it is unfortunate that it is not passing tonight, because Chief Creed is retiring this month; but he thinks it will be a nice testament to his hard work

when it does pass.

Mayor Feeney mentioned that Item #2 is a 100% reimbursable grant and that as soon as the money is appropriated the equipment can almost immediately begin to be installed. He stated that Item #3 is a routine matter, and Item #4 is an annual matter, and he thinks that both of those are safe for passage under the waiver of the three-read rule.

Mayor Feeney said that there are several things to report on that are not on the agenda tonight; many of much are probably anticipated but not such great news. First, he wanted to report on the state of finances in the City. Over the past two months the City has eagerly tracked as closely as possible the financial situation. He stated that they have found that the City income tax to a certain degree has lagged in terms of the hit that we saw in unemployment rates. While unemployment rates spiked dramatically over the last few of months, they did not see a drop in the income tax rates until about a month after the drop in the unemployment rates started going up. Mayor Feeney said the hit to income tax has been very severe, and we will also see a hit in areas like gas tax and other things that are based on the use of travel. He added that we will expect to see a significant decline in our hotel tax as well, and he would like to thank the Auditor for running an incredible number of scenarios from worst to worst case scenario and so on and so forth.

Mayor Feeney stated that the City issued layoff notices to two out of the three bargaining units over the past two months and he is happy to say at this point in time there have been no layoffs. He said that they have had considerable effort in negotiating layoff aversion with the AFSCME bargaining unit which covers everyone from office staff to folks on the back of garbage trucks to people who work in the water and sewer departments. He added they have negotiated and entered into with AFSCME and the State of Ohio something called a Shared Work Program. Many of the City employees, some in AFSCME and some that are not, which are classified Civil Service employees or appointed employees, are taking up to a 20% work reduction and consequently a pay reduction. It qualifies employees for some unemployment because of reduced hours, but it also offers considerable cost savings to the City. He thanked AFSCME for taking on that shared burden and those appointed and classified employees who are also reducing their hours to enable to help the City's budget. Mayor Feeney stated they are still working with the Fire Department for cost saving measures. There are several retirements this year, so they are hoping to do some savings through attrition. In the Police Department they are in an unfortunate situation where there is a significant number of retirements this year. They are actually in a position where they have to be hiring in the Police Department to keep numbers at something close to a stable level. He said there has been lots and lots of work on the personnel and budget side for the past couple of months. There have been capital expenditure cuts and budget cuts, and they are now navigating through what that looks like to operate in this new stripped-down budget. The City Building itself as a result of those reduced work hours will not be open on Fridays during the summer at least through August. He said they will see how that goes and potentially project that out into the fall, stating the building will be open its normal hours Monday – Thursday, 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and will be closed on Fridays when those employees participating in shared work will be off without pay.

Secondly, Mayor Feeney said that he is confirming what many have already suspected and that is the City pool will remain closed this summer. He said after reviewing the Governor's guidance and restrictions on when it was indicated that pools may open, the guidance combined with the financial aspects of opening a pool for 60 or so days just left him with too much uncertainty. He said he worked through this and talked with other cities, but determined that the healthiest, safest, and most financially secure decision he could make right now is to leave the pool closed for the summer.

The next item Mayor Feeney mentioned was confirming the cancelling the city-sponsored Fourth of July Fireworks for similar reasons. He stated that the financial concerns make the Fourth of July a difficult thing anyway, but the addition of the health concerns of managing the City Park forced them to make the decision to cancel the city-sponsored fireworks.

Mayor Feeney also added that they will not have the community yard sale day, and they will be cancelling the large item pick up program this year. He stated that these decisions are mostly budgetary and that it has become necessary to have lots of cuts at this time.

Mayor Feeney announced that the Parks and Recreation had paused their shelter rentals, but they have now resumed. He mentioned that as with many things you will hear rolling announcements that will match with the Governor's guidance. He said it is important to remember when the Governor says you may open that different entities have different capacities. When they say you may open but you must sanitize every 15 minutes and those sorts of things the City doesn't always have the capacity and financial ability to fit within those guidelines even though opening is permissible. He said there have been a series of very disappointing announcements but that they

really did run through as many scenarios as they could think of, which is why this announcement is coming out June 8th and not sooner.

Mayor Feeney expressed his condolences to President Arnold and his family on the passing of his Mother. He said they were very sad to hear that in the administration, and that he knows that she lived a good life there right by Poland Park. He also stated that a City employee, Mark Mathews, who is a fleet manager at Transit was involved in a very serious accident on his farm and is in serious condition in Columbus. He asked that everyone please keep him and his family in your prayers.

Finally, Mayor Feeney wanted to conclude on what he thinks is uplifting and hopeful news. For him it requires some reflection but definitely something that he is proud of the City undertaking and just wanted to report on the activities in the last 10 days or so. He stated that since the last Council meeting there have been protests, riots, and demonstrations across the country, and Chillicothe was not able to avoid those protests or demonstrations. But he said that they have been by and large almost 100% peaceful and devoid of any property destruction. He said that both the past two Saturdays we have had protests downtown, and he thinks that everybody involved from the protesters, to the community, to the City Police, to the Sheriff's Department, everybody worked together to listen and to make sure that voices were heard, protesters' rights were respected, and things went smoothly. Mayor Feeney stated that this past Saturday we had an incredible gathering downtown that he was happy to be a part of. He is happy to affirm what he said that day, and that is that Black Lives Matter, Black Lives Matter in Chillicothe., and that we have a lot of work to do to review our institutions, our City policies, and our practices to make sure that the administration and the rules that guide our institutions reflect that statement. He is very proud of the young woman who organized Saturday's demonstration, who was able to pull off a peaceful rally with hundreds of people and really get a message across. He was proud of those who participated and proud of the participation without hesitation from our law enforcement and the Sheriff. He stated that as some of you may know he committed to what's known as My Brother's Keeper Use of Force Review Pledge, and we will be engaging in that immediately. He said it involves a review of our use of force policies, engagement of the community, reporting findings to the community, and then reformation of those policies as necessary. He said it is likely he will be engaging some of you in that process, but that he also thinks that it is important to not be an administrative- or police department-led process. He stated that it will be led by the community because it is for the community, and he will have more to report to everyone at the next Council meeting. He said he is also taking the personal step to review his appointments to boards and commissions to make sure that they are diverse in his selections and to take action as necessary to make change. He said he will admit that these are just small steps, and he thinks that there is a lot of work to be done and a lot of self-reflection. He thinks this is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of what our community can and will do. He appreciates the support of those who were there that day and who have offered words of support and the downtown businesses who welcomed the protesters, left their shops open, and offered signs of support. He said it is moments like these that can cause a lot of stress for the community and really tug on our connections, but in the long term can make us stronger and that's when we show our best qualities as a community. He thanked all who participated or where there in spirit, and he looks inward to recommit to this effort and looks to all of you on Council to help keep him accountable.

Report of Auditor Spetnagel:

City Auditor Spetnagel reported that she did not have anything on the agenda to report on. She stated that her office had closed the books for May and that the City is down \$570,000. Auditor Spetnagel announced that the budget review meeting has been rescheduled from June 15 to June 22, 2020 before the Council meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Report of Law Director Villarreal:

City Law Director Villarreal reported that her office had received two items for legislation from the Safety Service Committee; one was regarding golf cart legislation and the other was for the Fire Department. She stated that she is excited to be working with new leadership at the City of Chillicothe Police Department and looking forward to the future.

Report of President Arnold:

President Arnold thanked Mr. Proehl for stepping in for him at the last meeting and that he did a very good job. He stated that he also was very proud with the fact that the protests have been peaceful and

that he supports anything that is peaceful. He added that hopefully this will all work out as we are struggling with that situation, and struggling still with the virus. President Arnold said he just basically wishes that everybody would just have patience, remain calm, cool and collected, have prudence, and not panic and we will all get through this.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

President Arnold provided information during the public participation portion of the Council meeting to enable the public to communicate with City Council if desired. There were no participants directly; however, Mr. Phillips stated that former Councilwoman Pat Patrick did suggest in the comments that the City put information on the water bills stating “no large item pick-up this year” since some individuals have started to set some things out.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Corcoran stated that she represents City Council on the Ross County-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau. She stated that at their meeting at the end of May that they discussed that with Tecumseh closing, the Paints cancelling, and various other areas not being open this summer, along with them surviving partly by the bed tax, that they have taken a positive approach since people are not traveling like they used to. They are going to reach out to our local community and to remind people of the resources and the outdoor recreation that we have, like the mounds and the downtown area, and that the hotels and restaurants locally are having a lot of specials to entice people to get out. Ms. Corcoran also added that she hoped that the City and the Parks & Recreation Department could come up with some creative ideas. She stated that parents are going to be looking to do some creative things with their kids like scavenger hunts or smaller activities that they can sign up for at the shelters at each of our smaller parks, like the things they have done at Millennium Grove and Art in the Park. She stated that she just hopes that the City comes up with some ideas for the kids and parents to enjoy together, and she suggested that there are maybe things that we could do later in the summer like opening up fire hydrants in certain places or sprinklers to help relieve the heat and the boredom. She suggested that since we are not opening the pool that perhaps we could use smaller funds to do other things like tennis lessons just as a suggestion. She said maybe we could just think outside of the box and remember to travel in your own backyard this year. She added that she was very proud to be a part of the protest on Saturday and that she was amazed but not shocked at the interaction of our community, our churches, and our law enforcement; from the beginning to the end everybody walked hand-in-hand and stood next to each other and made promises to help make us a better community. She stated that she was very proud of Chillicothe as always.

COUNCIL ASSIGNMENTS AND CALENDAR

President Arnold stated that there will be a budget review before the next Council meeting on Monday, June 22nd at 6:30 p.m.

President Arnold announced that there are several new committee assignments since the last meeting, some of which are on this meeting’s agenda, for inclusion in the Journal of Council:

Safety Services: Accept and appropriate \$1,000 from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources as a donation to the City’s Fishing Derby, which is put on by the Fire Department.

Development: Appropriate the money to participate in the Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission

Safety Services: Request for legislation to accept and appropriate \$781.00 from Public Entity Risk Services for a painting claim

Safety Services: Legislation to accept \$1,410.02 for an accident causing damage to a planter box

READING AND PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION

An Ordinance appropriating funds in the amount of \$149,833.33 for architectural, engineering, surveying and other costs for the planning and design of the new fire station at 40-50 Centennial Boulevard was not read by Clerk of Council due to the item being committed to a future date by the Safety Service Committee Chairperson, Ms. Gillum.

Ord. No. 41-20 appropriating \$31,000.00 for the installation of two electric vehicle charging stations on the city lot located at 32 east water street and declaring an emergency was read for the first time by title only. Mr. Shoemaker moved and Ms. Nickerson seconded that the three-reading rule be suspended, placing this item on final passage. All nine members present voted “yea” and President Arnold declared the rule suspended. All nine members present then voted “yea” on the item itself, and President Arnold declared Ordinance No. 41-20 adopted.

Ord. No. 42-20 accepting and appropriating \$1,410.02 in insurance funds received by the Chillicothe Fire Department for the repair of a planter that was damaged in a vehicle accident and declaring an emergency was read for the first time by title only. Ms. Gillum moved and Mr. Phillips seconded that the three-reading rule be suspended, placing this item on final passage. All nine members present voted “yea” and President Arnold declared the rule suspended. All nine members present then voted “yea” on the item itself, and President Arnold declared Ordinance No. 42-20 adopted.

Res. No. 11-20 authorizing the appropriation of funds in the amount of \$7,283.00 as participating local funds for the Ohio Valley Regional Development Commission on behalf of the City of Chillicothe, Ohio, for fiscal year 2021 and declaring an emergency was read for the first time by title only. Ms. Nickerson moved and Ms. Gillum seconded that the three-reading rule be suspended, placing this item on final passage. All nine members present voted “yea” and President Arnold declared the rule suspended. All nine members present then voted “yea” on the item itself, and President Arnold declared Resolution No. 11-20 adopted.

President Arnold inquired if there was a motion to adjourn.

Ms. Nickerson moved and Ms. Payne seconded that the regular meeting be adjourned. All nine members present voted “yea” and President Arnold declared the motion adopted. Adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Clerk of Council

President of Council

