

Video Conference
Regular Meeting
November 9, 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 Auditor Spetnagel and Law Director Villarreal. 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 October 26, 2020 be accepted and approved, as submitted by the Clerk. All members present voted “yea”, and President Arnold declared the motion adopted.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Safety Service Committee:

Ms. Gillum stated that the Safety Service Committee did not have any items on the agenda, therefore, there was nothing to report.

Development Committee:

Ms. Nickerson stated that the Development Committee did not have any items on the agenda; however, she asked if she may bring forth a request for legislation regarding the establishment of the Downtown Redevelopment Districts to be placed on the agenda for its first reading and requested to make a motion to waive the three-day receipt rule. Ms. Nickerson moved and Mr. Proehl seconded that the three-day receipt rule be suspended, placing the item on the agenda for the current meeting. All nine members voted “yea” and President Arnold declared the rule suspended.

Finance / Technology Committee:

Mr. Proehl reported the Finance Committee did not have any items on the agenda; therefore, there was nothing to report.

Engineering Committee:

Mr. Shoemaker stated that the Engineering Committee did not have any items on the agenda; therefore, there was nothing to report.

Utilities Committee:

Mr. Tatman reported that the Utilities Committee did not have any items on the agenda; therefore, there was nothing to report.

City Services / Transit Committee:

Ms. Lewis reported that the City Services Committee did not have any items on the agenda; therefore, there was nothing to report.

Community Affairs Committee:

Mr. Phillips stated that the Community Affairs Committee did not have any items on the agenda; therefore, there was nothing to report.

Human Resources Committee:

Ms. Payne reported that the Human Resources Committee had one item on the agenda, Item #4, which is the third reading of an ordinance amending Section 137.21 of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Chillicothe, Ohio titled “Residency Requirements” and declaring an emergency.

Parks / Recreation / Tourism Committee:

Ms. Corcoran stated that the Parks & Recreation Committee did not have any items on the agenda;

therefore, there was nothing to report.

PRESENTATION

Kim Jones, the Director of Community Health and Development for Adena Health System, and Audrey Barker, the Project Manager of the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program (RCORP), presented information and requested the support of City Council.

Ms. Jones stated that Community Health and Development at Adena does a lot of different Community Health Programs and initiatives that are built around what they consider to be some of the health priorities in our community. She added that one of those initiatives is what they have come to City Council about tonight, RCORP, which stands for Rural Communities Opioid Response Program. She said they are able to coordinate this effort due to a \$1 million grant that they received from HRSA and will be coordinating the project over a three-year period. She said that as Project Manager, Audrey Barker has 14 different strategies that she is coordinating with various groups such as Community Action, Ross County Health District, Ohio University- Chillicothe, that are really designed to implement the prevention, treatment and recovery spectrum for people with substance use disorder. She said that one of the particular priorities that they are working on that is part of this broad community issue relates to housing, and she turned it over to Ms. Barker to talk a little bit about her strategies she is working on regarding housing and what kind of assistance they are seeking from City Council.

Ms. Barker stated that one of the things when someone is in treatment and recovery is that they are trying to get their lives back on track from what has been destroyed during substance use. With that comes the struggles of finding adequate employment while also possibly getting advanced education or training to get higher paying employment, but that there is their housing situation. One of the biggest things with housing when someone is trying to recover is to get out of the environments they may have been in, and finding housing that is affordable under what employment they may be in at that time is at times difficult and can cause stressors. Unfortunately, these stressors are known to increase the relapses that people have while in substance use and treatment and recovery. One of the things they have done within the strategies is they are looking at transportation, housing and employment around helping people who are in treatment and recovery so there is one less thing they have to worry about or stress about if they are trying to get their lives back in order.

Ms. Barker stated that as they were doing some of the research, they have found that an affordable housing assessment had actually not been done for some time. They did find a Fair Housing Assessment that had been done in 2016, which looked a lot more at discriminations such as age, race, gender, marital status, education. It looked at those things but not necessarily at someone that was in substance use. With an Affordable Housing Assessment, it will help not only them in looking at the recovery housing options and helping people in recovery get into adequate housing and quality housing, it will also help a variety of organizations within our community. It helps with economic development, priorities within their budget, and helps with advocacy and community awareness. There are a lot of different things that they would be able to do with this. For example, with Ross County Community Action, it will help them as they look at their programs that are funded and how they are helping people with rent and utilities or their mortgage.

Ms. Barker said that they are asking for assistance in obtaining a consultant. While they have very knowledgeable people, nobody has really been able to dive into affordable housing in Chillicothe and Ross County. She said they are seeking to put out an RFP to consultants, and they are already putting \$30,000 towards it with the HRSA Grant. The Ross County Commissioners have already said they would be providing \$10,000 to help them pay for this consultant, and they are asking if the City would support them as well for an additional \$10,000. They are going to put the RFP out once they have the financials in order knowing they will have the support.

Kim Jones stated that they are estimating that the cost of the assessment is probably going to be somewhere around \$40,000, maybe a little bit less. They won't know until the RFP comes in. She said so the request is really for up to \$10,000 to do that. She added if the assessment for example does come in at \$40,000, they would just utilize \$5,000 from the Commissioners and \$5,000 from the City. She said they are very certain they can get it done for less than \$50,000, but depending on what additional things they might have to have added after they get started, they want to make sure they have the ability to do a comprehensive assessment that is not going to just be valuable to their team working on substance use disorder, but also for people working on economic development and those areas as well.

Ms. Nickerson asked what the assessment is going to provide.

Ms. Jones answered they are going to look at current housing stock and median prices for things, as well as opportunities for new housing to be built. If they wanted to get a grant from HUD for affordable housing units, they would need to have that type of assessment data to really justify larger funding. They are going to get more information on what is available and what this community defines as affordable, which is different depending upon the location of the community. She said it is really difficult to plan a target project when we don't really know what that median line is and how much they will need.

President Arnold said he was wondering how Chillicothe Metropolitan Housing falls into play and if the assessment would show HUD that there would be more need in the area. Could it work in conjunction with Chillicothe Metropolitan Housing that they would use that assessment to enlarge what they have available

Ms. Jones answered that yes that they would ensure that part of the RFP process. She said that Ms. Barker is working to put together a good committee of a variety of different folks in order to oversee the process and work with the consultant. That way they can ensure that there is broad representation for this assessment and that people are getting out of it what they need, so they will only have to do one. They are not leaving out anybody that might be able to benefit from it so that they can utilize it for things like grants and for opportunities to expand.

Ms. Barker added that in the RFP they mentioned a Housing Assessment Advisory team to oversee and be supportive to the consultant which would ask other agencies to have a representative to support the work.

Ms. Nickerson stated that obviously there is a housing shortage and that she feels that you could build a subdivision for that amount and doesn't understand what they would need an assessment for this.

Ms. Jones answered that if we know that we have a housing shortage, building subdivisions is going to serve one specific population, the population that has the means to pay for that. But they are not really sure what we need in terms of additional housing needs for people that are at different incomes, and how we can actually target getting builders and investors to come in to do different things as well as get money from HUD or other places for people that are low income.

Ms. Barker added that you could also take a look at what kind of housing is already available that is not up to code, up to date, needs to be rehabilitated and possibly apply for funds to refurbish these homes to be adequate for people that do not have the means and can't afford this particular level of housing.

Mr. Shoemaker said it sounds like a Community Housing Improvement Strategy that he used to do for grants a few years back to get CHIP funding. He said they might want to check with Tamra Lowe or Joanne Price at Ross County Planning.

Audrey answered that the last report received from Tamra Lowe was from 2006.

Mr. Shoemaker said that a lot of that data is derived from census data and is not necessarily updated. The good thing is new census data is coming out. Unfortunately, it probably doesn't have a lot of the information that will be helpful, because they have changed the information that they gather in the census

Ms. Jones stated that it is a very valuable tool that most communities that are developing in community development have as a tool to help guide that process. It is a common tool that they are hoping that with them by having an updated one, particularly as Chillicothe is continuing to evolve and grow itself that it will be something that will be beneficial to everyone. Obviously, their team will use it for a specific purpose and will be targeting low to middle income as part of it, but it certainly can be utilized in other economic scenarios for people at higher level incomes that we might be wanting to attract to the region.

Mr. Shoemaker said that he agreed with her and that it is definitely a part of a comprehensive approach to planning and is one piece of the puzzle that we would need to get done. He said it is nice that they are working with both the Ross County Commissioners and the City of Chillicothe and said he looks forward to hearing more about it as they move forward.

Mayor Feeney recommended that Ms. Jones and Ms. Barker put it in a written proposal for Council and any supporting documentation that he could forward on to President Arnold and turn it into a committee assignment request. They can then get it to Council after a committee meeting, and if there are more questions, the Council members can formulate them.

Mayor Feeney said the timing is good because they are in the middle of surveying the annual budget conversation anyway, so it may just be a request in the annual 2021 budget. They can make it into a formal request in front of Council. He said this was a nice way to do it to sort of present it so Council knows what is coming when they see it.

REPORTS OF OFFICIALS

Report of Mayor Feeney:

Mayor Feeney said that he supports Item #1 on the agenda regarding residency requirements, adding that he had originally asked Councilwoman Payne to hold off on passing this on first read just to see if there was much public comment on it, because it is a little bit of departure from the traditional rule. He said that this was something that could enable the City to get some diversity in hiring and that he has not had any feedback on it one way or the other; so, he would ask for Council's favorable votes on that tonight.

Mayor Feeney said that he would like to comment on the item that was added onto the agenda tonight, because he has had some questions about it. He said the districts that are being presented to Council are the first districts that they are proposing to be created. He added that it is important to remember that they are tax income financing districts, not abatement districts, and there is no immediate benefit to any property owner within the district. He stated that we can create as many districts as we want in the Downtown Historic District; these are just the first four that we are presenting, and the importance is to pass these four by December 31st of this year. He offered to answer any specific questions anyone might have about it, whether it's during the meeting or in person or a phone call. He said that tax income financing is not something that just rolls off the tongue or something that everyone is familiar with so he is more than happy to discuss. He said it took the subcommittee of the Downtown Development Commission several years to even figure out what they wanted to do, and then they worked over the past six months through this proposal. He said the committee represents several entities and the current nature of the proposal is good, and from here we could always add districts in this downtown area as we see fit. There will be a public hearing on November 30th for any questions or discussion.

He announced that the City was successful in receiving a pretty significant grant with the Ohio State Resource Network in conjunction with the Just Transition Fund. He thanked those who were interviewed and helped make this a successful application process. He said what we have been awarded in Phase I is the group will come in and help us develop a multi-year financial plan and financial projection model, the value of which is \$100,000. The work we are going to be able to pull off is something that many cities end up having to pay for as they do long-term modeling and so we are excited to have been awarded that project.

Mayor Feeney said that there have been a couple of departures to report. After 26 years he wanted to congratulate the City's Human Resources Director, Tamra Lowe. Her last day was this past week. Also external to the City is someone who has had an impact on a lot of lives is Leia Snyder at the Pioneer Center, who is leaving for another job elsewhere. He said congratulations to both of them.

Mayor Feeney stated that the situation is very dire with COVID and its spread all over the state, Ross County of course is no exception. He said we are averaging between 10 and 20 new cases per day, and we are going into a season that is dark and can sometimes be dreary, requiring people to be spending time indoors more. He said he wanted to encourage the community and Council members as leaders of the community to double down on our efforts in encouraging the wearing of masks. He said he realizes that with Thanksgiving coming up that it is a time we are not used to wearing a mask. All indicators are that it is in these family settings that people are letting their guard down; and those are the settings we need to be extra vigilant in wearing our masks. He said that he thinks it is not only our collective health that depends on efforts and our diligence but also the health of our local economy. He said that frankly he is very fearful that if we can't get things straightened up again and get these daily numbers going in the other direction, that the Governor or other entities may be forced to take more dramatic measures. He said he just wanted to encourage all of you to do what you can, get comfortable wearing a mask, and continue to fight. He knows that he probably speaks for all of us that we are worn down, we are tired of it, and it is easy to let the guard down, but this is the time to really continue our efforts. He said thank you to everybody for everything you are already doing, thank you for what you are doing for this community, and please just take the time to double down on those efforts, if for no other reason for the good of the community.

Report of Auditor Spetnagel:

City Auditor Spetnagel stated that she did not have anything on the agenda tonight but that she just wanted to remind everybody that there will be another budget review meeting on Monday, November 16th at 6:00 p.m. for Engineering, Transit, Service Department, Law Director, Mayor and City Auditor

Report of Law Director Villarreal:

City Law Director Villarreal stated they are currently putting COVID contingency plans in place to ensure continuous prosecutorial coverage in Municipal Court. She said that they are also working hard to keep their budget requests at a minimum while continuing to provide necessary services that are required of the Law Director's office

Report of President Arnold:

President Arnold said he would like to echo that everyone please wear a mask, stay away from each other, social distance, keep washing your hands, and avoid going out in highly public places if you can. He said he was not saying that you can't, but please be safe about doing it.

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. He added that contact information for any other time is on the website for each Council person if anyone needs to contact them. He also invited anyone who would like to be added to his mailing list to contact him directly. There were no participants during this meeting.

COUNCIL ASSIGNMENTS AND CALENDAR

President Arnold stated that there will be a budget meeting on Monday, November 16th at 6:00 p.m. Afterwards there will be a brief facilities meeting, which will be the last one for the year.

The next Council meeting will be Monday, November 23rd at 7:00 p.m.

Public Hearing will be on Monday, November 30th at 6:00 p.m. to discuss the Downtown Redevelopment District Legislation.

President Arnold announced that there are no new committee assignments since the last meeting.

READING AND PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION

Ord. No. 95-20 amending Section 137.21 of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Chillicothe, Ohio titled "Residency Requirements" and declaring an emergency was read for the third time by title only. All nine members present voted "yea" on the item, and President Arnold declared Ordinance No. 95-20 adopted.

An ordinance creating the Chillicothe Downtown Redevelopment District 1, Chillicothe Downtown Redevelopment District 2, Chillicothe Downtown Redevelopment District 3, and Chillicothe Downtown Redevelopment District 4, declaring the improvement to certain parcels of real property to be a public purpose; exempting seventy percent (70%) of the value of such improvements from real property taxation for a period of thirty years; requiring the owner of the parcels to make service payments in lieu of taxes; specifying the plan for using service payments to promote economic development and job creation; authorizing the execution of an Economic Development Plan; establishing the Chillicothe Downtown Redevelopment District 1 Fund, Chillicothe Downtown Redevelopment District 2 Fund, Chillicothe Downtown Redevelopment District 3 Fund, and Chillicothe Downtown Redevelopment District 4 Fund for the deposit of such service payments; and approving related matters was read for the first time by title only.

President Arnold inquired if there was a motion to adjourn.

Ms. Nickerson moved and Ms. Lewis seconded that the regular meeting be adjourned. All nine

members present voted “yea” and President Arnold declared the motion adopted. Adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Clerk of Council

President of Council