CALL TO ORDER – Roll Call, Pledge of Allegiance

Worthington City Council met in Regular Session on Monday, January 13, 2019, in the John P. Coleman Council Chambers of the Louis J.R. Goorey Municipal Building, 6550 North High Street, Worthington, Ohio. President Michael called the meeting to order at or about 7:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Peter Bucher, Rachael R. Dorothy, Beth Kowalczyk, Scott Myers, David Robinson, Douglas K. Smith, and Bonnie D. Michael

Member(s) Absent:

Also present: City Manager Matt Greeson, Assistant City Manager Robyn Stewart, Law Director Tom Lindsey, Director of Finance Scott Bartter, Director of Service & Engineering Dan Whited, Director of Planning & Building Lee Brown, Chief of Police Robert Ware, Director of Parks & Recreation Darren Hurley, Clerk of Council D. Kay Thress, Management Assistant Ethan Barnhardt

There were 17 visitors present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

President Michael invited all to stand and join in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

VISITOR COMMENTS

Michael Bates – 6560 Evening Street

Mr. Bates expressed how he wanted to publicly compliment the Municipal Planning Commission/Architectural Review Board (MPC/ARB) for their discussion about Stafford Village this past Thursday. Mr. Coulter did a particularly good job running the meeting and the comments made by the public were done in a positive manner.
Mr. Myers conveyed his thanks to the audience members at the MPC/ARB meeting for acting with decorum and professionalism. Comments were lucid and on point, not duplicative. There was no cheering, applauding, or booing or anything like that.

**SPECIAL PRESENTATION(S)**

- Metropolitan Transportation Plan

Mr. Greeson introduced Thea Walsh from the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) who has requested the opportunity to talk about the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Before Ms. Walsh gets started, he wanted to convey his kudos to her. She and her team are the region’s secret transportation weapons. They have been the behind the scenes people on many efforts such as the Hyperloop and the COTA commuter pass program. They do not get enough credit for the work they are doing behind the scenes.

Ms. Walsh introduced herself and explained how MORPC is Central Ohio’s regional council for over 70 members, made up of counties, cities, villages, townships, and other regional organizations. They bring communities together through a variety of programs and services in the areas of transportation, planning, data, residential services, government affairs, and communications.

Every four years they do an MTP identifying regional transportation strategies and projects that is then submitted to the US Department of Transportation and the Ohio Department of Transportation. The plan is fiscally constrained, meaning that the projects identified in the Plan must be cost feasible based on forecasted revenues and cost estimates. Things move from long range plan to transportation improvement program.

The Metropolitan Planning Area includes all of Delaware County, Franklin County, portions of Union County, Jerome Township, and some areas of Licking County and Fairfield County. This represents the majority of citizens and where they live. You must have certain density in order to qualify for federal funds.

One of the most significant reasons the MTP is important is that transportation project must be included in the MTP to be eligible for federal funding. This ensures that federal transportation dollars are being put towards projects that have been identified as a regional priority. Central Ohio is growing, demographics are changing, preferences are changing, and demands on the transportation system are changing. We are now the most populous region in Ohio, while much of the rest of the state is experiencing flat and sometimes negative growth. The current forecast is that by 2050 this will be a region of around three million people. In this planning area that means a population jump of 622,000 people, another 244,000 households, and 290,000 jobs.

Preferences are changing and people want options. This includes smaller homes, walkability, amenities, more mobility, and green space. People are increasingly working
at home and are picking where they want to live less by being closer to work. Having mobility options is more of a factor.

She discussed various regional goals which include a focus on energy consumption and promoting alternative fuels, protecting natural resources, positioning the region for economic growth, creating sustainable neighborhoods, and using public investments to benefit the health, safety, and welfare of people in the region.

The process that MORPC staff works through starts with inputs by taking local plans, looking at the data, talking to the public and engaging them about projects. Then setting goals, objectives and targets for the timeframe. The process involves continuously looking at the fiscal analysis and the impact a project may have. The greater an impact, the more likely it is they will be able to do the project. The output from this process is a document detailing a set of regional strategies and priority transportation projects for regional and local partners to work on together.

The most suggested project types where they receive the most comments are for bike and pedestrian projects. It is an important amenity of an upwardly mobile community.

She explained how they are moving through this process and are planning and encouraging people to attend an open house on February 26th at MORPC. A comment period will be open through April 3rd to get feedback about the projects they want to see happen or what they do not want to see happen in their neighborhood. In May 2020 the plan is to be adopted. She stated that all projects that impact the Worthington area will be forwarded to the City Manager to share with the City Council.

Ms. Dorothy brought up the previous comment about how there were numerous suggestions for bike and pedestrian projects. She asked what percentage of funding those projects get. Ms. Walsh responded that it is very small, normally in the 2-10% range. We do have a Complete Streets policy in Central Ohio, so bike and pedestrians has been incorporated into bigger projects as a given. Ms. Dorothy asked if there is anything that has looked at reducing fatalities. She noted items in news illustrating how pedestrians are vulnerable. Ms. Walsh said they do have a focused list of accident-prone areas with fatalities. There is a special funding pot at ODOT to address some of those areas, but that is more after the fact. There are efforts to encourage engineering that ensures there are bikeways and walkways as a part of the projects whenever possible. They work with communities to create their own bike and pedestrian plans to create safe environments. Ms. Dorothy noted how she always sees people walking along the sides of the road to bus stops with no pedestrian access. It is something we need to address. Crashes and deaths are unacceptable.

Ms. Kowalczyk asked whether there is any intersection between their planning and looking at safe routes to schools. Ms. Walsh said safe routes is a federally back program and it depends on the PTA, school district, and everyone being in alignment. They have done a sidewalk survey to see where sidewalks are missing. They are always willing to come to
the table on something like that. Long term they consider a certain level of Safe Routes to Schools funds.

Ms. Kowalczyk asked Mr. Greeson if the City would submit comments to this. Mr. Greeson said yes. We will look to see that our plans are captured and to see what our citizens are saying to MORPC. One project that has the potential to move from the MTP to Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is 161 where we are currently having talks with partners.

Mr. Bucher asked if Ms. Walsh saw any larger transportation projects being of interest considering the growth coming our way. Ms. Walsh expressed how at every meeting someone asks about light rail, bus transit, and modes of transportation where you do not have to drive. They have been doing a corridor study of five major corridors in Central Ohio which they are looking to advance with COTA. The five corridors have since grown to eight corridors and there is a continuous flow of conversation on that. Some federal applications are coming available and she would not be surprised if some of the projects jump to the front of the line.

Mr. Greeson noted that High Street was not one of those corridors. There are questions if we want to study US 23 as a potential location for alternative forms of transportation between Delaware, Worthington, and Columbus.

- Northeast Gateway Project Update

Mr. Greeson introduced consultants from EMH&T to give an update to Council. Staff has given updates on pieces of this project, but we wanted to have an update on the whole project. This project is important considering the eastern area of our community has been high growth with growing congestion. Reducing congestion helps businesses, commuters, increases safety, and reduces pollution. This area has new bike and pedestrian improvements and this project will introduce those.

Mr. Robinson asked Mr. Greeson to give some idea about the substantial growth and whether it is primarily commercial or residential. He additionally asked how much of the traffic through there is commercial versus residential. Mr. Greeson replied that the growth is commercial and residential with increased in housing in the northeast part of the school district and the Polaris area. There is much commercial growth through Central Ohio and this north central region. It is difficult to say it is only one use, but MORPC could provide more balanced data.

Mike Brehm and Franco Manno – EMH&T

Mr. Brehm explained how the last presentation regarding ideas for the gateway’s elements was about two years ago. The main goal tonight is to give an update on the aesthetics. He showed a graphic of the existing intersection of Wilson Bridge, Huntley, and Worthington-Galena and then he showed a graphic of the proposed improvements. The main goal of the project is to reduce congestion at the intersection and arrive at the preferred alternative
where Huntley and Worthington-Galena are more aligned in a north-south fashion. To realign Huntley and Worthington-Galena and create a new traffic center, the south leg of Worthington-Galena has to be pulled away. Other improvements incorporate a robust pedestrian and bicycle component with shared use paths, sidewalks, and bike lanes. Street lighting will be added as part of this project. Additionally, there will be channel improvements done to Rush Run.

There are a number of major milestones that have been recently accomplished. In Fall 2019 the City has purchased or taken appropriate action to gain right of entry on all necessary properties. This is a major change to the road network and requires a lot of right-of-way easements to get done. In Fall 2019 there was the Huntley Road water main relocation. As part of right-of-way acquisition, the City took ownership of several buildings. Demolition occurred at 431 Wilson Bridge Road last week. Demolition is scheduled for tomorrow at 7200 Huntley Road with site restoration starting later this month. This winter there will be Rush Run improvements downstream. Spring 2020 will see private utility relocations begin. Roadway construction will be beginning in the fall.

This has been a long process with many steps, and we are seeing some action now, but there is much to do before roadway construction can begin.

Mr. Manno showed a series of updated renderings showcasing the gateway features. He explained how this will be a symbolic entryway that is not located at the City line.

*Mr. Robinson asked if lettering would be yellow. Mr. Manno replied that it would be a golden color to contrast with the shrubs in the background. Mr. Robinson shared that he had a negative reaction to the yellow. Mr. Manno replied that it needs to be light in order to stand out.*

Mr. Manno showed an image of the landscaping, explained that it will be irrigated to make sure the investment stays.

*Ms. Dorothy said she appreciates their work on the bike and pedestrian features, but she is disappointed we have broad sweeping turns for cars. She wants to see more pedestrian safety features, but she appreciates the landscaping.*

Mr. Manno detailed how there is a stormwater pond as part of the project, and they selected a fountain with some spread. There will be traffic signals in three locations that will look like the ones on High Street and US 23, painted black with decorative bases. Pedestrian crossing signals will be similar with pedestrian touchpads. Street lighting throughout the project will also be of the same family as seen in the rest of the community. The traffic medians will help to close the distance of the lanes visually. There will be timber guard rails that are steel backed that have been used on other projects and seen in the Central Ohio area. Signage will have a black backing also consistent with the street lighting and traffic signals. The freeway underpass retaining walls will consists of a large concrete unit mimicking natural stone. Like the head walls and wing walls happening at culverts are the same as the freeway crossing with concrete formed to look like stone. Pedestrian railing
will be in places to make sure pedestrian and bicyclists are safe. Aesthetically they will be similar to the wood timber guardrail.

Ms. Kowalczyk asked whether we will have wayfinding signs like what we have been implementing around the City. Mr. Manno replied that they were not included in their engineering documents. Mr. Greeson said there is already jurisdictional gateway signage in the area and a welcome sign. We will have to think of where to put those if impacted. He does not know when or if we would have additional Community Center gateway signage, that would be further out.

Mr. Bucher asked if someone could elaborate on the Rush Run improvements and the stormwater considerations involved. Mr. Brehm explained how Rush Run should have been cleaned out a long time ago and had to be addressed as part of this project because without cleaning it out, there is no good drainage outlet for the project. In addition to cleaning out the silt and sediment, they have a design that tries to focus the water and increase the velocity through some steep side slopes covered in rock. This encourages a healthier flow through the channel. Another stormwater feature is the water quality basin with a fountain to provide water quality treatment for some of the runoff from the public roadways.

Mr. Myers asked if this was consistent with other Rush Run issues. Mr. Whited said it is different north of Huntley Bowl versus south of Huntley Bowl. In the long run it will help with downstream.

Ms. Dorothy talked about the boundaries of the project and how it touches two different crossing of railroad tracks and then asked about looking at quiet zones. Mr. Brehm said they did a preliminary study on quiet zones and it is something that could be considered as a separate process. There is nothing with this project that would preclude or make quiet zones more difficult, but they are not part of the Northeast Gateway improvements. There will be new pedestrian crossings across all three tracks. Aside from accommodating pedestrians, the rail crossings will remain largely the same. Mr. Greeson added that an extended median will be added at the Wilson Bridge Road crossing as an additional safety feature to help discourage people from running around the gates.

Mr. Myers asked if this would be presented to the ARB. Mr. Greeson replied no as it is all right of way and not in Architectural Review District.

President Michael asked what we will be doing to plan for the traffic and congestion during this project since we know there are a lot of people who commute through this area. Mr. Brehm replied that according to the current plan, there are only two detours. Aside from that at least one lane of traffic is maintained in each direction. The two detours are scheduled to be on weekends.

Mr. Robinson asked when the road construction for this project is slated to end. Mr. Brehm responded that would be worked through with ODOT since they are leading this project.
His opinion is that we get an early start then the bulk of the work will be done by end of calendar year 2021 with work outside the curb into 2022.

Ms. Kowalczyk questioned whether this type of work is coordinated with other work being done in the region. Mr. Brehm said that ODOT will be paying close attention to that. They have not heard of anything major to impact or make worse the construction traffic, but that is not to say there is not something.

REPORTS OF CITY OFFICIALS

Policy Item(s)


Mr. Bartter detailed how in 2018, the City adopted an updated General Fund Carryover Reserve Policy. Since we are over the 50% level, a discussion will be planned for February. The balance is largely built on revenues which were 2% overestimates and we only spent 92% of the money budgeted.

President Michael asked if some of the money bringing the balance up is from the gas tax increase. Mr. Bartter answered that it is the income tax collections that are slightly up. The gas tax goes into State Highway Fund.

Mr. Robinson asked about income tax receipts. It appears we project a $65,000 decrease, but we are up from projections. Mr. Bartter said that is partly due to development at 350 W. Wilson Bridge Road. When looking at the income tax report, withholding and net profit taxes are up. Mr. Robinson asked what happened with the all funds reporting because the General Fund is up, but the All Funds is down by $200,000. Mr. Bartter said that the All Funds from 2018-2019 is up $4 million with bond receipts. Mr. Robinson said he thought All Funds had decreased. Mr. Bartter said the CIP is included in that number, we ended 2018 with receipts from issuance of debt and funneling money to the General Fund and to some extent from the Revolving Fund. Mr. Robinson asked about how the General Fund balance decreased during December. Mr. Bartter explained how encumbrances occur anticipating spending in 2020.

Ms. Dorothy asked about the pie graphic showing the 69% from income tax. Mr. Bartter explained that we are trying to diversify our revenue. The change in the income tax percentage has to do with adding the Revolving Fund into General Fund and from investment income. We also had a significant Bureau of Workers Compensation refund. Ms. Dorothy said another reason we are putting the Revolving Fund into the General Fund is to better understand cost recovery. Mr. Bartter said that it removed duplicative activities and made the auditor happy. Ms. Dorothy asked about if we are looking at what we are charging for fees. Mr. Hurley said that report will be presented in February with a recommendation on how to proceed. Ms. Dorothy asked if we are looking at any additional fees. Mr. Greeson explained we are looking at Parks and Recreation first because they
have the largest number of fees. We will be looking at evaluate other fees in a similar systematic way.

**MOTION** Ms. Kowalczyk moved, Mr. Smith seconded a motion to accept the December 2019 Financial Report as presented.

The motion carried unanimously by a voice vote.

**Discussion Item(s)**

- **City Council Retreat**

  Mr. Greeson thanked Ms. Thress who was able to get March 13-14 scheduled for the City Council Retreat. They have reached out to Marty Jenkins who has facilitated our Council Retreats in the past to do so again. Tonight begins the conversation and nothing gets set in stone this evening. The information received this evening will be given to the facilitator and he will then do interviews with Councilmembers. He expressed how he is excited we are starting this quite a bit back from the retreat itself because it creates the opportunity to shape a positive agenda.

  Mr. Myers asserted that over the last couple years we have gotten into a rut focused on goal setting. While admirable, he does not believe that should be the primary focus of this retreat. He would like to see some exercises facilitating getting to know each other better. In the past week a couple issues have come up that need an in-depth discussion and debate on Council. We are once again talking about a meeting with the MPC/ARB, but at this point he does not know how we conduct that meeting because there is not a consensus about what it should entail. That discussion is going to lead to some other core issue. He believes some comments by other boards and commissions have created concerns. Councilmembers do not show up to board and commission meetings. He wants to see agendas planned out for the year to tackle issues. We have a lot on our plate this year coming down the pike. Lifestyle will be reaching out. There is the Stafford Village project. We have a new owner of the mall. We must get our head around these development projects and where we want to go. He brought up how he had coffee with an amazing woman who has spent the past ten years discussing the psychology of change. He discussed the possibility of having a presentation from her.

  Ms. Kowalczyk expressed that she likes the idea of looking at issues and things coming down the pike that Council needs to address. Considering Age Friendly being the latest in a series of plans, and looking at goals and new projects, she is concerned we will not have the capacity to get them done. These looming projects that are our responsibility to address need to be discussed. She is interested in the person who works with the psychology of change. She is also interested in talking about how we have conversations that are civil and civility in public debate. It is important to have diversity of revenue as a discussion. She is concerned that we are not going to get what we must get done if we come up with new things for staff to work on.
President Michael said she is hearing that people want to hear from the person talking about the psychology of change. We might want to get her in for Friday night during the retreat. Mr. Myers said he is willing to reach out to her. While she is a wonderful, capable person, she has an employer, and this is part of her job. He would not be offended if she asked for a fee.

Mr. Robinson asked to get references for this person. Mr. Myers said in his discussions with her, he can understand where you might fear a certain bias of her presentation. When he discussed it with her, he was convinced this was an aid to decision making, not a testament to right or wrong. Mr. Robinson said the idea of a Friday evening makes sense.

Mr. Smith said he is a proponent of talking philosophically and doing a deep dive.

Ms. Dorothy said we have several plans and it would be good to discuss how to integrate the plans and move forward with them. It would be wonderful if we could get a presentation.

Mr. Myers said that if we go with an issue approach, they tend to take on a life of their own and it is an organic discussion. We need to be careful about how many topics we would want to put in. We do not have many opportunities outside of the retreat to sit down and talk about core values and how government should work. This kind of a setting is conducive to that type of discussion.

Mr. Bucher said idea of focusing on issues makes sense. A lot of things could change in the community. As far as the flow of thing, he defers to them. He wants the time to be productive.

Ms. Kowalczyk asked about the discussion about the SRO and expressed that she would like to talk to Chief Ware about this.

Mr. Lindsey said considering the discussion on the Northeast Gateway, the City reached a tentative settlement on one parcel with the Anheuser-Busch company although easement documents still need to be finalized. One smaller dollar amount parcel has also reached a tentative settlement through the mediation process. That leaves us with eight remaining, two of which being paper cases for estates with fragmented parcels with no known heirs. He also wanted to echo earlier comments that when you see a discussion among people with different views conducted in a civil and responsible manner, it is a credit to the community. It was a professional honor to be there and witness that. He has seen many meetings with clapping and booing that does not make for a productive process.

REPORT OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mr. Bucher described how the Sustainability Committee of the Partnership received a presentation on the AEP Energy Savers Program. The group wants to push forward with it in Worthington. This could be the last year to get some significant funding unless future plans are made at the state level. Essentially an ad hoc group would make goals for
enrollment in efficiency programs with baseline participation. The more ambitious the goal, the bigger the financial reward for the project. There are various examples of other communities our size in the state that have benefitted. It was advised they have until mid to late summer to put forward a campaign for efficiency campaign enrollment. President Michael asked to share more information about what this entails.

Ms. Kowalczyk piggybacked on Mr. Bucher’s discussion and mentioned how the Partnership does have this Sustainability Committee that has really picked up steam and this is one of many initiatives they are looking at. A lot of people volunteered to do different things. Keep an eye out for other potential opportunities to support them in the future.

Ms. Dorothy shared that the McConnell Arts Center has an art show opening this Thursday in celebration of their 10-year anniversary. She expressed how the Sustainability initiative is exciting. She and Mr. Robinson met with some people who are looking to see if we can ask for the next time we have our bid for electric aggregation what kind of renewables we can have here in Ohio, so we look for more information about that in the future.

Mr. Robinson commended Mr. Bartter on the management of the City’s finances.

President Michael brought up the Look Ahead Agenda and stated that legislation for Stafford Village is to be introduced February 3 for a public hearing on February 18.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION Mr. Myers moved, Ms. Dorothy seconded a motion to adjourn.

President Michael declared the meeting adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

/s/ Ethan C. Barnhardt
Management Assistant

APPROVED by the City Council, this 3rd day of February 2020.

/s/ Bonnie D. Michael
Council President