



CITY OF WORTHINGTON
Worthington City Council Minutes
April 20, 2020

6550 N. High Street
Worthington, Ohio 43085

CALL TO ORDER – Roll Call, Pledge of Allegiance

Worthington City Council met remotely in Regular Session on Monday, April 20, 2020, via Microsoft Teams video conference. 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, David Robinson, Douglas K. Smith, and Bonnie D. Michael

Member(s) Absent: Scott Myers

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, Director of Parks & Recreation Darren Hurley, Chief of Police Robert Ware, Chief of Fire & EMS Mark Zambito, Clerk of Council D. Kay Thress

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

VISITOR COMMENTS

There were no visitor comments.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION

- Community Visioning Update

Ms. Stewart explained how the Visioning Committee has been actively discussing how to continue to do their work in light of the current environment and having their conversations with the community virtually.

Mr. Sherman detailed how at the Committee's virtual meeting on April 14, they discussed their philosophy and approach moving forward with this process. There are glimmers of

hope and goodness in the midst of the overwhelming drumbeat of bleak news. They discussed how things will likely not get back to normal anytime soon and perhaps not in this calendar year. Despite this, it is important to move forward and they intend to keep their original October 1, 2020 finish date. While the Committee cannot physically get in front of people, it is important that they are grounded in normalcy. It is necessary to look at their needs, realign resources, and refocus. The Committee agreed that their shared goals are to get more creative, create momentum, and keep things moving forward.

He explained how the Committee has a three-pronged approach to focus on the future. First is a newly reworked website that has lots of things to see and do, and places for the community to voice their opinions and give input. The second piece is the Speakers Bureau which will be conducted through webinars with various community groups. Finally, signage is a way to passively get out in front of the community. After talking with staff, they are looking at creating election type signs with QR codes strategically positioned around the city.

Ms. Dorothy expressed how she was worried about this process moving forward. She thanked Mr. Sherman for his work keeping this process together. It is important to keep moving towards that October 1st deadline.

Ms. Kowalczyk thanked Mr. Sherman for his presentation and shared how she is glad they have picked up and pivoted considering the challenges. Our future is going to look different now. There may be gaps where we might need to do better for people who otherwise may be left behind. She asked Mr. Sherman how much of where we are at now is factoring into their discussions. Have there been thoughts into the process and the outcomes. Mr. Sherman said they are all learning as they go. The key is to stay flexible and assume nothing. It will be interesting to ask the community how they are feeling. Their primary goal is to listen and engage appropriately.

Mr. Smith conveyed how he was a huge proponent of going door to door originally, but he will have to back off of that. The idea of webinars, signage, and doing a mailing is good. He is glad there is momentum. This is a great time to get out and ask the questions to see what the real heart of Worthington is.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

- Meeting Minutes – April 6, 2020

MOTION Mr. Bucher moved, and Ms. Kowalczyk seconded a motion to approve the April 6, 2020 meeting minutes as presented.

The motion to approve the April 6, 2020 meeting minutes as presented carried unanimously by a voice vote.

REPORTS OF CITY OFFICIALS

Policy Item(s)

- Permission to Bid – 2020 Street Improvement Program

Mr. Greeson explained how typically we are taking Councilmembers around our streets physically to see the ones that staff is recommending improvements to. Tonight, we will be providing a virtual presentation of our streets.

Mr. Whited explained how we typically do not get such an early start on this program which we are looking to move forward to bid, totaling \$901,300. It was initially intended to include McCord Park, but we are recommending delaying that due to our current fiscal situation. He detailed the various areas being recommended for repair.

Ms. Dorothy asked about the funding for McCord Park and where it would be coming from. Mr. Whited said it would have been from the Parks Department funds. Mr. Hurley explained the 2020 CIP included \$1.89 million for McCord Park renovations. We had seen an opportunity to take advantage of the Street Improvement Program (SIP) quantities to receive better pricing. However, that would trigger phase one which is why there is the recommendation to hold off so that we can reassess.

Ms. Dorothy said it was her understanding that we were going to bond out McCord Park. She asked where we are getting the cash for the rest of the SIP. Mr. Bartter said it is spending cash accumulated in the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). By holding off on the McCord Park paving, we will sacrifice economies of scale, but it gives us flexibility to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 and the resulting impact on our income taxes.

Ms. Dorothy asked if Gas Taxes go to fund full time staff. Mr. Barter responded that is correct.

Ms. Dorothy conveyed how she is happy we are getting some improvements on the Olentangy trail. She asked whether bike and pedestrian improvements on 161 will be a part of any plans. Mr. Greeson explained how there is a judgement being made to move forward with the SIP, because it is basic core maintenance. We do not want to fall behind during what appears to be difficult fiscal times. We put off desirable projects that are not necessarily must dos such as McCord Park. There are two other projects that are also potentially impacted in the CIP in the near term. The Diamond Brite project was sent for bid but no bids were received. The judgement is that project can wait another year. Second, the bids we received for the 161 crossing exceeded the engineer's estimate, requiring a rebid. We do not recommend conducting a rebid until we have had the chance to do a more comprehensive evaluation of the CIP. Ms. Dorothy said she does want to challenge what our core maintenance responsibilities are, but we do see many people walking and biking and there needs to be an emphasis on all people. Mr. Greeson said while we call this the street program, it does include many repairs on sidewalks particularly where there are displacements.

Mr. Robinson asked if we had included McCord Park component what would have been the out of pocket expense we wanted to be bonded. Mr. Bartter replied that the out of pocket in 2020 would be zero, the first payment would be in 2021. We are not going to issue any debt until September.

Mr. Bucher asked if this work is normally done by one contractor or if it could be broken up into pieces. He also wondered if the costs for this on par with improvements in the previous SIPs. Mr. Whited said that the cost is consistent with previous years. He explained that the economies of scale by using one contractor is why it is bid with a single contractor. We typically use a large-scale paving contractor to do the work.

MOTION Mr. Smith made a motion to remove McCord Park from the proposal. The motion was seconded by Ms. Dorothy.

The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

MOTION Mr. Robinson made a motion to grant permission to bid the project. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bucher.

The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

- SR 161 & Linworth Road Intersection – Letter to Franklin County Transportation Improvement District

Mr. Greeson explained how occasionally there are opportunities that come around and we need to take advantage of them. A few years ago, we participated in a study with the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), Franklin County, Perry Township, and the City of Columbus, to look at SR 161 down to Sawmill. That process concluded in 2017 and since then, staff have met periodically to find ways to move forward. Ms. Stewart participated in a call recently, and that group identified an opportunity to apply for federal funding through MORPC attributable funding dollars with the funding cycle opening up later this summer. There is the belief that this would be a very competitive project. If selected, the funding may not be available until 2025-2026, so we need to work with our partners early to get in line for resources several years down the road. This process would begin by sending a letter to the Franklin County Transportation Improvement District. The Franklin County Engineer's office would handle the federal funds and the right-of-way acquisition. We believe that they would do a good job and that would relieve us of those duties.

Mr. Bucher asked for clarification that if we move forward, when will we know if the funds come through. Mr. Greeson said we would know tentatively later this year.

President Michael explained how this is a project that many people living in the area have expressed needs to be re-done. She noted that if we do not go forward with a letter now, that will push this project back several more years.

Ms. Dorothy expressed how she does believe this is a good project. She asserted that she does not believe that cars should be the top priority. In addition to bike and pedestrian along 161, people have requested north/south accommodations for people using bikes and walk. We do not want Worthington to just be a place people are trying to get through as fast as possible, we need to make sure to be accommodating for everyone in our community.

MOTION Ms. Kowalczyk made a motion to authorize the letter to the Franklin County Transportation Improvement District. The motion was seconded by Mr. Smith.

The motion passed unanimously by a voice vote.

Information Item(s)

- Update on COVID-19

Captain Craig detailed how he is the daily liaison with Columbus Public Health and the most recent confirmed case update at 2:00 pm indicated that Franklin County has 1570 confirmed cases with 34 deaths. In Columbus there are 1119 cases with 18 deaths. Worthington has 16 confirmed cases and one death at this juncture.

Ms. Kowalczyk asked as the daily numbers come in whether that triggers anything. Captain Craig explained that as far as the numbers go, it does not necessarily change operations, but it does help to prepare for the next operational periods. We look 48 hours ahead. Speaking with his counterparts in the area, the trend we are seeing is continuing to rise along with a lot more testing. It is also beginning to get out into nursing homes, prisons, and jails. Ms. Kowalczyk asked about our role working with nursing homes in the area. Captain Craig detailed how we are there to help out and advise, but nursing homes fall under the state.

Lieutenant Mette explained how the operations section receives reports from the Division of Police, the Division of Fire, Service, and communications related to the different parts of the organizations on a daily basis. We are currently well staffed to handle the crisis. Operational needs and missions undertaken are updated daily. We have had very good business compliance with Ohio Department of Health orders. Some major accomplishments include establishing substations for Police and Fire to keep staff separated and developing procedures for handling COVID-19 exposures with staff, helping to prevent possible spread. Lastly, the standing up of Lexipol knowledge management is one channel of communications for staff to keep message on point.

Mr. Hurley gave the report for the logistics section on behalf of Mr. Oliver. They are responsible for ensuring that the City has resources and key supporting processes to sustain our critical and essential operations. We have an adequate reserve of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). There are processes to coordinate needs across the City including the storing of masks in case we want to recycle them. We are confident in our cleaning supplies. Some accomplishments include having 41 people working from home

securely and productively. There was an assessment of demand for childcare for first responders and only a few had a need. We worked with local daycares to apply for special licenses. Finally, we are trying to maintain a safe work environment with plenty of supplies.

Ms. Stewart detailed how the planning section looks forward to the next stage of the crisis and what that looks like and how to prepare. Mr. Hurley leads the community support and engagement branch with many of his staff in Parks and Recreation looking at community events on the calendar and figuring out what ought to happen with those events. We are working with and talking to our community partners. We are also looking at ways to keep the community connected in the face of distancing online in a virtual setting. The financial planning branch has a group looking at short term cash conservation and longer-term strategies. Third we are examining how we might re-open when it makes sense to do so, which will be driven by public health advice. We expect to have phases of re-opening. We are starting to look at what those phases look like without assigning specific timelines at this time.

Ms. Kowalczyk asked about what kind of adjustments will potentially be made to how we do business. Ms. Stewart explained that is still in the planning phases. The initial phases will be smaller. When things reopen, we are not expecting things to look the same, there will be requirements to have masks and use hand sanitizer. These things are still being brainstormed.

Mr. Bartter detailed how he is leading the finance and administration section which is focused on monitoring purchasing for COVID-19, personnel issues, and evaluating the fiscal impacts of the current incident. With the passage of Ordinance 15-2020, it appropriated \$100,000 increasing our contingency to \$150,000. So far only \$5,300 has been spent, mostly due to Parks and Recreation refunds. The COVID-19 response has cost \$28,000 in terms of things such as PPE and, cleaning supplies. We are working to track overtime costs and submitting all reimbursable expenses through FEMA and the state. Personnel is heavily involved in ensuring compliance with federal guidelines and the Families First Act.

President Michael asked about federal funding only going to reimburse for COVID-19 based expenditures. Mr. Bartter said that is correct. Mr. Greeson explained how dollars from the CARES Act flows through the state government to local governments. It is his understanding that communities over 500,000 will receive direct aid, and other cities will have funding come through the state. This is a real challenge for local governments, just like businesses, and we are experiencing a dramatic drop in revenue. Revenue replacement would be best to ensure continuity of services. President Michael expressed the Ohio Municipal League is encouraging cities to send letters and she wondered if we should as well. Mr. Greeson said he thinks that we should.

Mr. McCorkle explained how he is leading the liaison section which reaches out to over 250 organizations on a weekly basis, both employers and the faith community. Their

primary purpose is to be a point of contact to solicit feedback. They are also engaging in early dialogue with key employers about impact of COVID-19 on their payroll.

Mr. Linkenhoker with the Worthington Resource Pantry detailed how they began car side distribution of prepacked food kits on March 14. They have served 5,743 individuals and 67,185 meals. 438 of those visits came from families that have never visited the resource pantry before. They have experienced a 595% increase from this time period a year before. They have never seen a jump like that. Luckily, the community has come together and made incredible contributions to the pantry. They are currently using contributions to purchase food and have been able to expand their services to support more people. Through a collaboration with CoHatch and Honda, they are delivering food to about 25 homebound families every week and that number continues to increase. They have worked with the schools to distribute fresh produce kits.

Ms. Kowalczyk thanked Mr. Linkenhoker for everything the pantry is doing. She asked about the food supply and the challenges coming in terms of access to food. Mr. Linkenhoker said they usually make on Mid-Ohio Food purchase every month that is between 8,000-12,000 lbs. They have gone from one purchase per month to two per month to take advantage of whatever might come up as available. Mid-Ohio ordering does not work like a wholesaler, it is based on what is available and what they can get for a good price. They are low on canned foods in a way they have not seen for five or six years. At this time there is a lot of fresh food. They are keeping an eye on the fresh meat situation and if the meat supply goes down that is going to hurt pantries quite a bit. Ms. Kowalczyk asked if the pantry has been able to take advantage of dollars coming down from the government. Mr. Linkenhoker explained how the dollars go to food banks and is not something they have seen yet.

Ms. Parini with the Worthington Partnership explained how they have three brands underneath their umbrella, the Partnership, the Farmer's Market, and Experience Worthington. Their main page has turned into a support local business page. There has been a merchant meeting via Zoom with FCBank about the CARES Act. They had new signs produced and installed to advertise some of the restaurants that are still open for carryout. She shared how it has been tough listening to businesses and their issues having to close their doors. She highlighted AR Workshop which has done a great job pivoting and have created DIY kits, reporting a 40% sales growth year over year. Many businesses have been pivoting. Experience Worthington has done an incredible job to get the word out, including producing things such as fun ways to measure six feet of distance. There are new virtual history tours. The Worthington Farmer's Market which is the largest in the region has worked around the clock to change to a new pre order and pick up model. They have seen a 148% increase in the five weeks since their first drive thru. They had to discover new volunteers for this new model to protect high risk folks. She highlighted the City's GIS manager who helped to develop a new colorful map for the market.

Ms. Brown who leads the communications section explained how their primary goal is to provide Worthington specific information, as well as health and community resources. Information is coming from our partners with Columbus Public Health and the Centers for

Disease Control, and we are working together to remain consistent with our messaging. Information about the City's response and how people can help is posted on the City's website at Worthington.org/coronavirus. We are also pushing out information through web notifications, social media channels, and video posts.

Chief Zambito commented on how he has seen the most amazing dedication and commitment from people during this crisis. The virus brings a whole new danger we are not used to dealing with. All departments have been demonstrating dedication and innovation.

Chief Ware echoed the comments from Chief Zambito and commended the community which has done a phenomenal job. However, the rate of spread may be expanding, and it is still dangerously high. Without question, people are experiencing cabin fever. He urged everyone not get caught up with what happens in other cities and states. Do not be lured into false sense of security. This is not over yet. Many people are carrying the virus without exhibiting symptoms. Limiting the spread is critical to allow people to return to work safely.

Mr. Greeson explained how when this first started, he issued a proclamation of civil emergency for the City of Worthington. That expires tomorrow at midnight and it is his intent to extend it given the factors that still face us. There have been some questions asked about how states of emergency work. In the City's codified ordinances, he is allowed to issue proclamations of state of emergency when there is a crisis or disaster that affects the life or property of people in our community or substantially impairs the function of city government. The ordinances give the ability to institute temporary rules, restrictions, and prohibitions not in place in normal times. This may include lifting rules, requirements, or restrictions to ease our response in order to ensure continuity of government in emergency.

There were questions from Mr. Robinson and others about how emergency proclamations work, how they are established and how they end. In this case it was established by the City Manager. When issued, this proclamation was time limited for 30 days and roughly tied to the length of the initial orders from the Governor. The emergency proclamation may also expire or be changed by action of the City Manager, or a majority vote of the City Council. Powers cannot be exercised that are not inserted in the proclamation. Sometimes in emergencies you add to the changes and rules as you face new needs. Authority is broad to include but not limited to curfews, prohibiting the sale of alcohol, restricting movement into or out of an area, and limiting assemblage of persons. The code is written broadly because each emergency is different. It currently only does three main things which are to support the public health directives of the state and federal governments, and Columbus Public Health, to provides for greater flexibility of assignment for employees, and to provide greater flexibility for purchase of goods and equipment.

The check and balance for this is that the City Council has the authority to vote by majority. The administration of City government is not a co-equal branch of government. We work for the City Council. You can direct our action by your majority vote. Council can convene to take binding action with a quorum. In an emergency situation, Council can meet within

24 hours. The Council President, City Manager, or three Councilmembers can call a meeting.

Mr. Greeson touched briefly on the economic impacts of COVID-19 to the City. He sent out a five-page memo that begins to look at preliminary projections. There is a lot that we do not know yet and we are making some educated best guesses. We do believe this will have a system impact, hitting every revenue stream either in terms of delay or reduction in revenue. Looking at income taxes, the projection we are looking at includes a 20% reduction in income tax revenue in March through June. We are projecting a 10% drop in July through September and 5% from October to December. That is approximately a \$2.5 million loss. That is a scenario assuming a steep decline with a gradual return.

In addition to a delay of filing there are some additional cash flow considerations. We are concerned about Parks and Recreation revenues. If we are projected to re-open in early May that will create about a \$330,000 loss in revenue. If that extends to June that increases to \$544,000. Cancelling all summer camps will be around a \$188,000 loss. There will be reductions of gas tax revenue from reduced driving. We have not been holding court which decreases fines. We are currently monitoring building permits. We are also concerned about the reduction of the hotel/motel tax.

We are developing cash conservation strategies and we will report back to Council at upcoming meetings. Staff is also examining all CIP projects. Moving into the summer and the budget development process we will not only be looking at near term actions to lower expenditures but also looking into 2021 and updating our five-year forecasts.

Mr. Robinson asked about the assumptions RITA used to come up with an estimation and if they seem accurate. He also asked about the revenue lost in Parks and Recreation and if we could speak to any offsetting reductions. Mr. Bartter explained how RITA's assumptions are as good of a measure as we can do right now, projecting a net 10.5% decrease. Looking historically for income tax collections the worst experiences were in 2001 which had a 13% one-year decrease and 2009 which saw a 5.2% decrease. There are many factors at play including how long we will stay at home, furloughs, wage reductions, and what businesses can reopen. The RITA model is a good starting place. Mr. Greeson explained how in response to revenue lost from the Griswold and Community center, we have maintained fulltime employees, but have had to unfortunately furlough our part time employees. That has a savings of about \$60,000 per pay period.

REPORT OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mr. Bucher explained how Wednesday is the 50th Earth Day. Although normal celebrations likely cannot occur, he still encourages people to enjoy our natural spaces and do what they can to make an improvement.

Ms. Kowalczyk expressed how much she appreciated hearing from the team in the incident command structure.

Ms. Dorothy shared her appreciation for everything staff is doing, in particular Ms. Brown who has done an excellent job providing updates and keeping us informed.

President Michael stated how it is sad talking about the canceling of the Memorial Day Parade. Mr. Greeson explained how postponing may be the more appropriate term, we are working to evaluate a better time to accommodate the parade or to have it done differently. A decision on the July 4 fireworks is upcoming.

ADJOURNMENT

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

President Michael declared the meeting adjourned at 9:54 p.m.

/s/ D. Kay Thress
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the City Council, this
4th day of May, 2020.*

/s/ Bonnie D. Michael
Council President