

**City of Worthington and Sharon Township
Joint Meeting Minutes
May 4, 2020**

CALL TO ORDER – Roll Call, Pledge of Allegiance:

Worthington City Council met remotely in Joint Session with Sharon Township Trustees on Monday, May 4, 2020, via Microsoft Teams video conference. Worthington City Council President Michael called the meeting to order at or about 7:30 P.M.

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

Sharon Township Trustees Present: Lindsay Duffey, John Oberle, Laura Kunze

Member(s) Absent:

Also present: City Manager Matthew Greeson, Assistant City Manager Robyn Stewart, Director of Law Tom Lindsey, Director of Finance Scott Bartter, Director of Planning & Building Lee Brown, Director of Service & Engineering Dan Whited, 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.

Prior to introductions, President Michael shared that anyone wishing to submit comments during this meeting can do so by e-mailing to: Council@worthington.org or calling the phone number and submitting the conference ID information provided on the screen.

NEW LEGISLATION TO BE INTRODUCED

Resolution No. 22-2020

Levying Tax for the Maintenance of Union Cemetery dba Walnut Grove and Flint Cemetery for the Tax Collection Year 2021.

Introduced by Mr. Oberle.

MOTION

Ms. Dorothy made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 22-2020. The motion was seconded by Ms. Duffey.

Mr. Greeson explained that City Council and the Sharon Township Trustees convene annually to consider levying the tax for maintenance of its cemeteries, Walnut Grove and Flint cemetery. He welcomed the Trustees and apologized for being unable to meet in person. The Cemetery Board is once again requesting the continuation of five-tenths of one mill for 2021. He reported it being customary to hear from the Cemetery Board Chair,

Courtney Chapman. He welcomed Mr. Chapman to the virtual meeting and turned the meeting over to him

Mr. Chapman thanked Council and the Trustees for the opportunity to share the Walnut Grove & Flint Union cemeteries yearly update. He together with Ms. Dorothy and Mr. Oberle make up the Cemetery Board. As mentioned by Mr. Greeson, they are here to request the continuation of one-half of one mill for the year 2021.

Mr. Chapman shared that the trustees are still working towards the recently acquired Ozem Gardner house becoming the cemetery's office. They have recently completed roof structural stabilization on the building and are in the process of replacing the roofing material. New downspouts and gutters should be completed soon. The next step in the process is enveloping the house, which will secure it all the way around. There will be new windows, tuck pointing, new doors, replacement of the cellar and removing the porch on the back of the house. The unfinished garage has been replaced with a new and much improved one that stores the heavy equipment used at the cemetery. Since much of the work was done in-house, they were able to save about \$12,000.

Mr. Chapman reported that because they want to follow the high standards of the City and the Township in their selection of planners for this project, there are two that he would like to mention. Hardlines Design Company is a woman- and minority-owned architecture, planning and historical preservation firm headquartered in Columbus. It is important to preserve and rehabilitate projects such as this throughout the United States. The other group is POD design. Their work should be familiar because they are currently doing playground work for the City. The Trustees are pleased with the work they have been doing for them.

Mr. Chapman reported that the Circle of Honor at Walnut Grove Cemetery has been refurbished so that it would be ready for Memorial Day. Unfortunately, the Memorial Day parade has been canceled. They have had the tradition of planting flags at the side of every veteran they know about and that practice will continue this year. Some 11,150 flags will be placed at graves in both cemeteries. That tradition will allow family and friends who wish to visit loved ones have an opportunity to do so and view their efforts.

Mr. Chapman shared that the cemetery is an essential business and they are maintaining regular hours during this pandemic. Staff is available by phone or email. They are also asking families to limit the number of those that come to the gravesites

Budget considerations during this time included looking at things they need to do and identify those things that they would like to do. If there is a shortfall, the trustees have identified \$170,000 or 22% that they can move out of their budget. If things really get tough, they have a total of \$257,000 identified or 33% of their budget that they could not spend. Mr. Chapman said he would not put these cuts in concrete, but they are a first step. No one knows how all of this is going to play out, but they will stay alert and flexible and make whatever corrections need to be made. They have items identified that will provide guidance when and if decisions need to be made.

Mr. Chapman shared that there are always unsung heroes. The people who work at the cemetery are the ones that prepare the graves, place the tarps, set up the chairs and when

the service is over, they pick the stuff up and complete the burial. They prepare the grounds to be cared for, for the next 100 years and they do it quietly. They have a great staff. Tom Kayati has been there for forty years. Much of the staff has been there about ten years. Because of the Coronavirus, people are not gathering. Some people have not been able to have a showing. Recently, those guys who have been in the background doing all the work have been asked to be pallbearers for those families. There was also a family that could not have a showing. Family members requested that the casket be opened at the cemetery so that members could view their loved one. The guys have done it very well and it is time to recognize that.

Mr. Chapman again thanked Council and the Trustees and invited questions.

Mr. Robinson thanked Mr. Chapman for the presentation. He asked for clarification on the budget information. Specifically, the figures that were presented on Page 15 to the ones that correlates to a 22% decrease in spending if the short fall is \$170,000. It looks to him like total expenditures are a little over \$400,000 so a 22% reduction would be closer to \$85,000 instead of \$170,000. He asked for help understanding. Mr. Chapman replied that he did not have the numbers in front of him. He asked Mr. Oberle or Ms. Dorothy if they could respond.

Mr. Robinson stated that he would just jump ahead to the heart of his question. In these times of serious economic uncertainty, it seems we should be looking everywhere, including expenses of the cemeteries, where we might defer non-essential spending. He was wondering whether the tax levy could be reduced, perhaps to 4/10ths, leading to a reduction of about \$75,000 in revenue. He asked how that change would impact the cemeteries operation.

Mr. Oberle responding to Mr. Robinson's first question, agreed that these are in and out times. He thinks the 22% and 33% were likely placed there just in case tax revenues were coming in smaller than anticipated. They are thinking there may be tax bills that may not be paid, and they may have a reduction. He thinks any further reduction could impact their core mission. They are trying to build a sustainability fund. In 100 years when the next generations are taking care of this community, they must make sure there is enough money to take care of the cemeteries. He thinks that is an investment over time. They are working on long-term capital projects that are very important. These are well sustained investments over the years. While he understands the thought, he thinks the reduction would only have an impact of about \$10 per household at \$300,000 value. He thinks it is a great question. He personally supports maintaining the current levy because he thinks through Mr. Chapman's leadership with the Advisory Board, and with the help of Ms. Russell and Mr. Kayati and the good work that is being done, there are so many good things that are being done for the community. He walks through the cemeteries several times a week. It is a park and it all takes money to keep those resources going.

Mr. Robinson thanked Mr. Oberle for his comments. He asked if there was a reduction of \$175,000, what could be deferred for the year. Mr. Chapman reported that being part of what they were looking at. At first cut they would not necessarily eliminate certain elements but would rather cut them down to be frugal with their monies. They have a history of being very conservative with their funds. There are some things that they cannot touch. They have put together the sustainability fund and is something they have built up

and something they need to continue to build so that in 25, 50 or 75 years from now they have the funds to take care of the cemetery.

Ms. Dorothy shared that she serves on the Cemetery Trustee Board and has been a trustee for a while. She recognizes that they have had a very long-term vision and planning process to be able to undertake all the projects that they want to over the future for both properties, Walnut Grove and Flint cemetery. The planning for Flint has been going on for over 20 years and any additional revenue they have had, they have been saving to be able to develop those lands. There is Phase II and Phase III of the cemetery proper. They recently purchased the Ozem Gardner property to be the forever office in the Flint Road cemetery and need to spend capital funding to provide for that office. They can defer having that office since they do have one at Walnut Grove, which is where Ms. Russell works most of the time. There are only a few spaces left in Walnut Grove so anyone wanting a full space can contact Ms. Russell. Flint cemetery has space and because this is a pandemic, there are many with real needs for the cemeteries. There are people coming in daily. Going from .5 mill to .4 is a 20% reduction in funding, which is a significant revenue source for Walnut Grove. It does not do much for typical homeowners, saving \$5 or \$10 but it is a significant decrease in the budget to provide services. It maintains those park settings for people. They recently partnered with the Historical Society and provide a walking tour with the history provided regarding the graves of people who came and participated in Worthington history. There are many partners who put time and effort into the gardens and the plans. They are judicious to implement the plans. She does not think that such a reduction would provide good bang for a buck.

President Michael thanked Mr. Oberle and Ms. Dorothy for their service on the Board.

In response to Ms. Kowalczyk's question regarding loss of property taxes, Mr. Chapman replied that the Board is working to stay ahead of the game, which is why they have been going over the different scenarios.

In response to President's Michael question about whether staff has any information about property tax collections/projections, Mr. Bartter replied no. There is no way to know how many are not going to pay their property taxes in the second half.

Mr. Kowalczyk concluded that while things appear to be unpredictable, the approach the Board is talking about seems to be flexible. She does not believe that it is a good time to consider making changes.

Mr. Chapman reported there being two stages; one is to be alert to what is happening and then be flexible to deal with whatever occurs.

There being no additional comments, President Michael requested a roll call on Resolution No. 22-2020. The motion carried by the following vote:

Yes 10 Bucher, Robinson, Kowalczyk, Dorothy, Smith, Myers, Michael, Duffey, Oberle, and Kunze

No 0

