



CITY OF WORTHINGTON
Worthington City Council Minutes
July 13, 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, July 13, 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, 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, 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.

Immediately following the pledge, President Michael provided instructions to those watching online, on how to join and participate in the meeting virtually.

NEW LEGISLATION TO BE INTRODUCED

Ordinance No. 31-2020

Amending Codified Ordinance Section 929.01 – Sewer Contract with Columbus and Authorizing the City Manager to Enter into a Thirty-Year Sewer Services Agreement with the City of Columbus.

Introduced by Mr. Robinson.

Ms. Michael stated that the public hearing on this ordinance will be July 20, 2020.

Ordinance No. 32-2020

Agreeing to the Adjustment of the Boundaries Between the City of Columbus and the City of Worthington by Consenting to the Transfer from the City of Columbus to the City of Worthington of Approximately 2 Acres and the Transfer from the City of Worthington to the City of Columbus of Approximately 1.3 Acres Located in the Vicinity of the Intersection Between Lakeview Plaza Boulevard, Sancus Boulevard, and Worthington-Galena Road.

Introduced by Mr. Bucher.

Mr. Lindsey explained that because of some timing issues with the filing of one of the parcels involved in the boundary adjustment, the public hearing on this ordinance will need to be set for September 8, 2020.

REPORTS OF CITY OFFICIALS

Policy Items

- Financial Report - June 2020

Finance Director Scott Bartter shared that he has a robust PowerPoint discussion on financial issues coming up shortly. He would be happy to answer any questions members have at this time regarding the June 2020 Financial Report. He did request a motion to accept the report as presented.

Mr. Robinson commented that at the end of June total income tax collections were 3.23% below estimates. That also reflects what appears to be not final numbers for individuals and net profit accounts due to the delayed filing date for income taxes. Mr. Bartter agreed that we are 3.23% below estimates while being down 57% for the month of June and 81% for the month of June for individual and net profit respectively. He believes that some of that will come back in August/September after the Wednesday's filing date. Mr. Robinson stated that he was interested in Mr. Bartter's reaction and assessment of the 3.23%, which looks like that is well below the projections earlier in the year when the COVID virus first struck. At that time, they were talking about 10%. He asked if he is feeling more optimistic that we are not going to go that deep in the hole? Mr. Bartter replied that he is more optimistic and that is reflected in the PowerPoint that he will see before long.

MOTION

Ms. Kowalczyk made a motion, seconded by Mr. Smith to adopt the June 2020 Financial Report as presented.

The motion carried unanimously.

Discussion Items

- Franklin County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan

Mr. Greeson shared that every so often Franklin County goes through the process of updating the Hazard Mitigation Plan. *The plan was updated in 2018 and they were trying to get communities to adopt it in 2019. When we realized we had not yet adopted it, we wanted to bring it forward. He invited Mr. Whited to provide additional information.*

Mr. Whited reiterated that this document was compiled in 2018 and we were asked to approve it. The purpose of the Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan is to improve community resilience all over the county. They go through a rigorous period to outline risks of historically and potentially future issues that may occur and they outline long and short-term mitigations that could help lessen the severity of those issues. The plan is for multiple things, awareness and education of hazards and potentials for mitigation. To identify and prioritize mitigation plans and attempt to implement some of those and identify mitigation steps. Probably most importantly is that it allows these communities to qualify for assistance should a hazard occur.

As Mr. Greeson mentioned, the previous staff that worked with the core group of the Emergency Management Association and Homeland Security on this document. He has talked to Franklin County staff to better understand what we have in that plan, how it affects us and what we need to do to further refine that as we move to the next phase. It allows us to pursue mitigation if we have a hazard. There is no funding for this mitigation plan. Those funds would have to be CIP options that we would go through. It is a long document, but he feels it is important to implement this plan in order to qualify for funding in the future. It also helps us improve our own resiliency and identify things we can do with or without funding as we move forward. He added that the plan is based on risk factors. The recent flooding event in May was substantial but did not qualify for funding because a Presidential declaration was not declared for that event.

Ms. Dorothy shared that she went through the entire 288-page document. She noticed that some entities, multiple municipalities, and cities that had many items in their list and Worthington had three. Emergency power and buildings were mentioned and the flooding from 2007 was listed but she has not seen anything in the CIP. She asked if that was going to be a part of the CIP discussion at any time. She also wondered what the thought was of having a limited scope versus the huge laundry list of items and whether that matters. She is confused as to the details when compared to other municipalities.

Mr. Whited commented that he was not involved. The staff that worked on this is no longer with the City. The generators we have included in our plan is the service generator that just died last year and was replaced. Typical generator life is about 20 years or 1,500 hours. Most of our generators are on the cusp of that life but not on the hours. Due to the preventive maintenance performed regularly he has confidence in them.

As far as flooding, we have been dealing with aging infrastructure and managing that to a very good capability. Much of the mitigation efforts for our type of situations tend to lean towards retrofits or raising the elevation of homes, which would not be feasible in our area. Flood proofing a home ensures upper levels, the habitable levels are flood proof, but water may be able to enter basements or uninhabited areas, relocating/moving a building, totally sealing the home or levies or flood walls around the house or lastly, demolition. What he understands from his research is that retrofitting was looked at as a demolition type of approach and creating green space on those structures, but he doesn't know that for sure. Franklin County is in the process of getting that information to him.

Ms. Dorothy commented that the most important thing is that we sign on so that we are eligible. Mr. Whited agreed. We also need to be very thoughtful and proactive in identifying areas that we would want to get funding for should we have a natural disaster. Once the declaration is made you have 30 days to provide your detailed plan and that doesn't give you much time if it is a complicated mitigated effort. We need to do some planning on how we may best wish to respond to some of these hazards should they occur.

President Michael asked if we are working on any plans regarding the flooding that occurred or future flooding? She knows that many people were impacted. Mr. Whited replied that we have not seen flooding like what occurred in March and May since 1964. We really have no control over the elevation of the Olentangy River and those houses lie low and along the edge of the river. There is not a lot we can do except for some of the retrofit issues that were just mentioned. Just not feasible to build a full-scale flood wall or fully prevent flooding occurring along those properties in such a severe situation.

Mr. Robinson stated that he was curious, whether this mitigation plan explicitly acknowledges and uses language around climate change or is it still indirect by using terms like extreme heat and so forth? Mr. Whited replied that it references those things that could occur. It does not go into the degree of acknowledging climate change. But he hopes to be a part of the group that does the next revision. In the background, that raises the potential for flooding, drought, high heat, and those things that make it more real. Just by the fact that we had an event recently that has not been experienced for over 30 years, makes it easy to acknowledge that those things are there. He assumes that will be included.

Mr. Robinson commented that he would be curious to know how the latest science pertaining to climate change is considered and incorporated into these plans. Mr. Whited replied that as these are mitigated, he assumes those would be in the background discussion about the fact that would raise the potential for some of the events to occur. As an estimate what potential flooding can occur for certain rainfall events or drought can happen. That is a good question when it comes down to it and when he gets involved, he will ask that question for Mr. Robinson. Mr. Robinson thanked him.

Mr. Whited stated that members can review the information for another week when the resolution will be introduced. He added that signing on to the plan does not make us obligated to do anything, but it does provide us with an opportunity to be better should something happen.

- 2021 Operating Budget & 2021-2025 Capital Improvements Plan

Mr. Greeson commented that it has been the practice in recent years to touch base with council in July, as staff begins to gear up for our in-depth budget development process. It begins initially with a lot of internal analytical work, discussion with every department, review of proposals and ultimately crafting of the City Manager's recommended budget that will be submitted in late September/early October. This presentation is intended to share trends and demands that we see before we begin developing the draft document. This year with COVID-19 and the financial impacts of economic downturn, there is a great deal of talk about. It has also been our practice to get some early feedback and input from City Council in advance of the staff budget development process to gain some understanding of what is on your mind. We also want to talk a little about the schedule and a little about what it is going to be like to budget in a time of revenue reduction. Mr. Bartter will talk about some of the forecasts and some concerns about the General Fund and then Ms. Stewart will touch on the C.I.P. He will wrap up with process conversation.

Mr. Bartter shared that he wanted to first provide a quick finance update. We have completed the comprehensive annual financial report for 2019. It is online and available to access. The paper copy has just been processed at the printers and we will have it available shortly as well as the 2019 CAFR. The 2019 audit has been completed and unmodified with no comments, which is what we are looking for. We anticipate receiving the Auditor of State award with distinction for the second year in a row for 2019. In 2018 we did receive the certificate of achievement for excellence in financial reporting for the first year and anticipate receiving that again for 2019's report.

Council has heard a great deal from him this year. We talked about the fund balance in February as we closed 2019 with a fund balance above 50%. Our fund balance policy requires a discussion with Council about that fund balance. We then had the pandemic and multiple discussions as they relate to COVID-19, including a May 11th discussion which showed multiple scenarios which we were planning for that we thought might happen with our income tax collections. At this time, we have the annual July budget update.

Mr. Bartter said he wanted to do a little bit of a reset and talk about all the major events that have put both a strain on and have benefited the budget. First and foremost, is the global pandemic and the resulting economic shutdown. Along with that, he included this information because it is one of his biggest concerns as we move forward, in that many people, corporations and businesses have figured out how employees can work from home. We are highly dependent on withholdings of those employees who come into the City to work. If they are working from home, that income tax would go away. Other strains include: the vacating of the former Anthem building in 2018, the lack of hotel/motel tax due to the demolition of the Holiday Inn site and no development there yet as well as the state mandated and uniformity of income tax with net operating losses permitted to be carried forward in 2016, health insurance costs and overtime. These are all pressures against the budget.

A couple of things that are of benefit include the redevelopment of 350 West Wilson Bridge, and an increase in gas tax revenue. After a quick comparison this afternoon, he discovered that we are up about \$130,000 from this point last year in gas tax revenue. Those funds go into the state highway funds and street improvement fund and not the general fund. It is a benefit because we pay for employees out of those two funds.

The Bureau of Workers Compensation refunds, we received about a million dollars over the past two years. We had a 2017 property tax reappraisal that increased our property tax collections by about \$300K to \$325,000 as well as a CARES Act Fund which should be forthcoming this week.

Two events he would like to mention include the transition of the 911 center to the Northwest Regional Emergency Communication Center (NRECC). That transition includes significant negative one-time costs for 2020. There are future savings. Then the Northeast Gateway project has compliance issues, cash flow and managing the funding from multiple sources, although, that is ending.

To recap the last few budget years and the actions taken; we have utilized fund balance in funds other than the general funds by reducing the transfer to police pension fund for 2018 to 2019. We would normally transfer between \$600,000 and \$625,000 a year. We dropped that to \$325,000, and \$200,000 for a total savings of around \$600,000. That is not money not expected but not expected out of the General Fund. We eliminated the revolving fund and moved that fund balance into the General. That was about \$400,000. We also utilized community technology to fund the Council streaming initiative.

No services have been expanded and many budget requests from departments over the past two years have been denied. Over \$425,000 in budget requests have not be funded in both the 2019 and 2020 budgets. We have also reduced staffing. On review, every department in the organization has really been made over but just in terms of full-time employees, we have approximately ten less full-time employees now than we did in 2002. By holding multiple positions open in 2020, it will hopefully increase our unexpended appropriations, which is the most impactful thing we can do. We have also furloughed many part-time employees because of the pandemic.

We have sought outside funding resources and utilized more debt financing. We received a grant for the electric vehicle charging stations, the Northeast Gateway combines multiple sources for funding, we have \$10 million or so planned in capital debt in the current C.I.P. We have invested in building improvements that have reduced energy usage and operating costs and we have taken steps to reduce health insurance cost primarily by eliminating the traditional health insurance plan and moving to a high-deductible plan.

Regarding the five-year forecast, we expected a gap in 2020, largely because we did not anticipate the Anthem building being refilled. We also knew there would be a one-time expense related to the transition to NRECC. Members may recall that we forecasted seeing about a 5% income tax growth in 2021. We were hoping that the former Anthem building would be full. We would get the spike in 2021, plus the savings from the move of the

NRECC and the gap here will be a very manageable at approximately \$113,000. As we move into the out years, that gap will remain manageable.

Mr. Bartter showed a graph for the General Fund, Fund Balance in the (As Adopted) budget through 2024. The straight red line depicts the 35% of prior year expenditures that we have the adopted policy to stay above in the five-year forecast that was presented in the 2020 budget document. We can stay above that red line through 2024.

Then the coronavirus, COVID-19 occurred, and in May we shared RITA income tax projections with three possible scenarios for 2020. We had a best-case scenario where the income tax was down 5%, a worst case down 20% and RITA's actual projection of down 10% in 2020. All scenarios accounted for losses in the Parks and Recreation revenue with 20% of the best and middle scenarios and 40% in the worst-case scenario.

The next slide showed the numbers of the 2020 through 2024 Five-Year Forecast was displayed. The information has been adjusted for COVID-19. Although it has increased with holding five or six positions open and we are hoping to get to 2 million in unexpended appropriations, there is still a significant gap in 2020. The bigger issue is the gap has increased from \$113,000 in 2021 to about 1.1 million. We do not have the same level of income tax and this would be with a return to Parks and Recreation funding to 2019 levels in 2021. That continues with about a \$1 million gap in all the out years.

Revenue Assumptions in this Five-Year Forecast: Income tax, we finish 2020 down \$1.6 million (6% from 2019 levels). That is down about 5% from the 2020 estimate. As we discussed in the financial report, he is optimistic that we will see some bounce back in net profit and individual collections come August and September. He does not think we get to positive, but he doesn't think we are anywhere near being down 20% or even 10%. He thinks we will end between 4.5% and 6%.

Our current forecast has us recovering most of that in 2021 and by 2022 we are above 2019 collection levels. This was compiled about ten days ago, and he thinks it is already too optimistic. This is what we are working with for right now. All of this is subject to change as we continue to get more information.

For Parks and Recreation, we finish 2020 down about \$370,000 or 16% from 2019. It would take a very, very, very strong second half for that to occur and he is not sure that the COVID-19 scenario is going to allow us to recover all of that, but that is what we are working with for now. In 2021, we return to 2019 collection levels for membership fees, programming fees, et cetera.

On the expenditure side, our 2020 unexpended appropriations need to exceed 2 million in this forecast, or about 6%. If we continue to hold positions open, that is the biggest way we can impact that and hopefully we can get to that. The 2021 expenditures as we are developing with the 2021 budget anticipate an 8% increase in health insurance and 27 pays in 2021 that we need to account for.

The next slide shows the fund balance and forecast that has been updated to reflect COVID-19 adjustments. With the scenario just went over, we get close to that 5% level. We dip to 33% of prior year expenditures as a fund balance by the end of 2021. There is currently no way to change that trend. It needs to kick up back up by the end 2024 around 24%.

Ms. Stewart reporting on the Capital side of things shared that as we begin thinking about the 2021-2025 C.I.P. she wants to revisit where we were when the current C.I.P., the 2020-2024 was adopted. The capital plan was very financially constrained at that time because income taxes were projected to be flat. Since income taxes are the predominate funding source and essentially about the only funding source except for when we issue bonds. To get the numbers to an acceptable level several projects and equipment purchases were delayed. Several items that we were originally planning to fund from cash were shifted to bonding, which increases the debt planned for the city to take on. Even with these moves there was still a deficit in the 2020 and 2021 plans, so we were needing to use existing fund balance in the capital fund. Our fund balance amount in that capital fund was continuing to stay below the traditional target that the city utilizes. Since that time, we have felt the impacts of the coronavirus and so in 2020, we have needed to take several steps to preserve cash and delay some expenses. In addition, we had already had to take to get the numbers to balance in the current C.I.P., we delayed into 2021 the resurfacing of the pools at the community center, replacement of the south end door, the replacement of the playground equipment at Selby Park, the replacement of our self-contained breathing apparatus and the planned renovations for McCord Park. We had reductions in projects and equipment that were moving forward as we tried to incorporate lower revenue projections in the C.I.P.

Expenditure Demands – Most of our demands are for maintenance of existing infrastructure such as: sanitary sewer lines, waterlines, city building needs, and then we have the additional interest and projects that have been identified through the Park’s Master Plan. Obviously, we design for renovations to McCord Park, which ties back to the Park’s Master Plan. There are the investments that were recommended as part of the bicycle and pedestrian master plan. We have investments we are wanting to implement along Wilson Bridge Road to maintain that primary economic corridor for us. The pools, as you know, need a lot of investments, so ways to look at how Swiminc’s operations and that facility can be addressed. We join with partners to study the SR-161 corridor and there are several recommendations from that study. As Council knows we are moving forward in conjunction with other partners in that area, city of Columbus, Perry Township, ODOT, and Franklin County to try to pursue federal funds for the intersection improvements at Linworth Road.

Income Tax (COVID 19) – C.I.P. – The projections for the income tax revenue in the C.I.P. takes a noticeable dip from 2019 to 2020. 2021 shows the same associated increase that Mr. Bartter just described on the operating budget side. However, we do not reach 2019 levels in 2021. We do not get past 2019 income tax levels until we get to 2022. The bottom line, we expect the C.I.P. to be very financially constrained.

Mr. Greeson shared that he has several slides to talk about process and then staff are available to address questions of the council. He thinks as we go into this process for

preparing the 2021 budget, we are going to ask departments to look for opportunities for further reductions. That may mean holding positions vacant or eliminating positions or streamlining things further. This is going to get harder to do. As we reflected at the beginning of the presentation, we are a smaller organization than we were even eighteen years ago, which is the period that Mr. Bartter picked to capture the number. But he believes we have not reduced many services at all even though we have less staff doing the work.

Strategy for Budgeting with Reduced Revenue – We are going to use as much information as we have available to inform our budget and C.I.P. development process. What does that mean? We are going to look closely at the Community Visioning Process and the survey work they are doing, the SOAR analysis, and some of the input they are getting from our community members. Members will recall we did a Parks and Recreation cost recovery analysis. We will be looking at other plans, particularly ones that inform the Capital Improvement Program. We will look at some of our water/sewer infrastructure studies because with the constrained C.I.P. we are going to probably place the most focus on maintaining existing critical infrastructure.

In terms of informing our thought process, we think there are other strategies that would be beneficial to employ this year and consider. One is the statistically valid survey. There is survey work for each of our plans being done by the Visioning Committee that he thinks might be helpful but we feel like we are at one of those junctures where it may be extra valuable in order to make some data driven decisions to capture some statistically valid information, information about what Worthington residents prioritize in terms of our services. That could help us inform any evaluation of services that might be reduced. Then potentially inform an evaluation of revenue enhancement strategies. What you often find is that community's value and find the services that cities provide desirable but sometimes they prefer or prioritize some over others. In many instances, they are sometimes willing to pay more. We do not know exactly how the COVID-19 global pandemic will affect revenue, but we feel like we need to be prepared with valid community feedback before we make decisions about service reductions or pursue revenue enhancement strategies. We are getting to the point where we may need to consider evaluating revenue enhancement strategies and he highlighted that in his budget message last year. Several of the areas that other communities have higher employ to help fund services such as fees, property taxes, income tax, and redevelopment/economic development. He is not focusing on specifics, but rather just highlighting some of the ones up for conversation if we find ourselves in a need to do that. As we look at our finances and go into budget process and start to develop options for consideration, if any of those affect services or move us towards increases in fees or taxes, then certainly we need to involve the community in some additional ways. So, there may be some additional citizen involvement efforts as we further develop this.

Process for Approval – Potential schedule for budget process and approval: October 5 – Distribute proposed Budget & CIP; October 12 – Overview of Budget & Five-Year Forecast; October 19 – Presentation of CIP; November 2 & 9 – Department and community groups presentations; November 16 – Follow-up with City Council and Introduce 2021 Budget Ordinance; and December 7 – Public Hearing on the 2021 Budget Ordinance. We

will start undertaking the early development of these materials soon and we will really finalize that in September for distribution to council in early October. That gives a solid three months for review of the Forecast, presentation of the C.I.P., hearing from any groups, organizations and departments members and still provides a healthy amount of time for Council members to debate our proposals. This is the process we are looking at and we would be glad to answer any questions.

Ms. Kowalczyk asked what departments the five or six open positions are located. Mr. Greeson replied that there are two in Parks, one in Service, one in Planning and Building, and one in Police.

Ms. Kowalczyk then asked if he anticipates there being additional openings due to attrition or retirement. Mr. Bartter replied that he is aware of one potential.

Ms. Kowalczyk then asked if the city has seen any savings because of the change in operations from COVID-19? Mr. Bartter replied no. He added that Council has appropriated over \$600,000 in additional appropriations in the General Fund in 2020. We had additionally appropriated funds for refunds in the Parks and Recreation Department, unemployment compensation and we continue to pay furloughed employees. We appropriated for electric related to the electric vehicle charging stations and the list goes on and on. We had \$155,000 for the pipe break in the community center. So no, we have not really seen any real reductions in expenses.

Ms. Kowalczyk concluded the expenses mentioned offset any savings because we were not using the parks for a while or things like that. Mr. Bartter agreed. He thinks there may be some savings for ballfields because they were not attended to for a month, but the savings would be very negligible in comparison to expenses.

Ms. Kowalczyk understands that the projections are conservative. She asked if there are any events that have been contemplated that could change those projections that might help spur the economy. Mr. Bartter commented that redevelopment at the mall might change and potentially the refilling of the anthem building. He worked that information into future growth but some major employer leaving would certainly impact it the other way. But those would be the primary influences.

Ms. Kowalczyk shared that she is a little concerned about the surveying. We have devoted resources to do the visioning process. Then we are going to devote more resources to a survey. She asked how critical is it that we do a survey and commit more city resources to it and what would those resources be? Mr. Greeson replied that staff is wrestling with this. Currently the survey information that we are going to get that does have some information in it that would be useful for budgeting is still self-select. People are choosing to participate in that survey, and it is not closed yet. So, he is not sure that he has a sense, although Ms. Stewart may have a better sense of its demographic, and geographic reach. Maybe it helps answer the question but what we get a little concerned about as we start to think about really serious conversations about service levels or serious conversations about asking for more revenue or implementing some new revenue strategy is, are we confident that we

have a representative sample of the entire community. Are we asking all the questions that need to be asked about what services residents place the greatest priority on and whether they would be willing to accept reductions or pay more? He thinks the visioning process survey is good, but it doesn't go that far, and it is self-select. He thinks we need to determine whether we want something more statistically reliable, to make some of these big-budget decisions this fall and even into 2021.

Ms. Kowalczyk reiterated weighing the cost of doing such a survey with the benefits of having that input and whether that input is really going to be informative for us. My last comment is just you had mentioned citizen review of anything we put together and she knows we have had some suggestion to put together a citizen budget advisory committee or something to that effect. It seems it might be a good idea for this kind of scenario if not thinking about that in the future. She still thinks it is a good idea to have some kind of an advisory group that could not only inform the public as we are making budget decisions, but also to get that input from them in terms of how we are doing in budgeting. So that is just a suggestion.

President Michael commented that she knows they have talked about people working from home and she has heard there being some proposals of shifting of the income tax collection based on where employees are working from. She asked the status on that and asked if we have a clue on how that would impact Worthington. Mr. Bartter in answering the second question first, the answer is no. It would be very difficult to ascertain what the impact to the city of Worthington would be. When Governor Mike DeWine signed his emergency order and in the following week or so the sweeping legislation passed that talked about waiving testing for students, et cetera, a clause was thrown in there so that during the state of emergency, any withholding should be continued at the place where it was previously being withheld. If you are an employee at Worthington Industries who now works from home, the employee withholding is supposed to be continued to be withheld to the city of Worthington. Recently, the Buckeye Institute filed suit against the city of Columbus challenging the constitutionality of that clause. He does not know what the outcome of that may be. He thinks more globally as he mentioned in the presentation, businesses have figured out how to be effective with people working from home and that may cause them to not be as interested in putting 250 or 300 employees in a singular building on High Street or wherever the case may be. As we move forward, he thinks that is something to be cognizant of. The actual legislation filed by the Buckeye Institute is probably going to take years to sort out. He does not know when we will have resolution on that. We had the supreme court hearings on whether it was okay to have centralized collections and that took two to two and a half years.

Ms. Dorothy thanked President Michael for the question about work from home and indicated that she was planning to ask the same question. She thinks it is something members should be aware of.

Ms. Dorothy thinks the statistically valid input from residents about funding is a great idea. As a council member she has had some issues having input of what we spend money on. She thinks one time she received an extra \$5K or \$10,000 for a tree planting fund. But it

seems like the early process is staff driven. She would much rather try to get as much input from a statistically valid input gauge on what we do with our money and budget than from individual people.

Mr. Myers commented that it would seem to him, especially if we are talking about potential revenue enhancements, are they of the believe that at some point our budget issues may impact core services to the point we would have to raise revenue Mr. Greeson replied he thinks it is possible. Mr. Myers commented that the biggest issue is that we do not know at this time. COVID and work from home and everything that is going on just has so much uncertainty. It is difficult to know how to move forward. He is curious as it seems as if our income tax, at least currently, is not as bad as what you might think or what we were afraid of. Mr. Bartter agreed. He thinks that observation is very astute. It is true. If you look at just June withholding, it was up 5%, which is almost shocking to him. How is June withholding up 5%? He looked at some reports and our largest employers' payroll have not been dramatically impacted if impacted at all right now. The shutdown certainly affects retail and restaurants and they are extremely important to the business community, but their wages are not a substantial portion of our income tax collection. Those are the employees whose jobs immediately went away, and they went on unemployment and we stopped received the income tax on. It is not that big of a hit to not have employees making \$8, or \$10 or \$12 an hour as it would be the engineers or doctors or CPA's or whatever the case may be where they did not stop paying employees. They may have sent them to work from home, but they are continuing. We are not seeing as RITA projected, 10% drop or our worst-case scenario of 20%. He thinks we are going to end up below 5% or 5.5% below 2019. If you think about individual and net profit taxes, those are either taxes from 2019's filings or estimates for 2020 being paid in 2021. Those estimates will probably be negatively impacted. People will not estimate to pay as much in taxes for 2020 as they might have otherwise, but the 2019 portion should be relatively unaffected. It is a long-winded answer to say yes, we are in a little bit better position than either our worst-case or RITA middle of the road projections.

Mr. Greeson shared that he thinks the challenge is that it is a relatively tight budget already. Ms. Stewart talked about what we did last year to the capital plan and we have already projected that we needed the fund balance and have been denying a significant request from the departments in recent years. He thinks it is increasingly challenging to take a million dollars out of the general fund budget, for instance without starting to impact some of the services because we have reorganized every department and we are already quite a bit smaller than a decade ago. For anybody that may be listening, we have roughly 150 full-time employees or so with five or six vacancies. That makes an impact. Listening to some of the dialogue through the visioning process, which has been very rich, expectations or desires for us to do a lot more, particularly in the capital area to improve the quality of life of our community are high. There are many ideas about how we can improve our community both coming out of that process as well as embedded in our existing plans. He thinks the conversation is, (a) do we want to maintain service levels and if so, what does it take to do that. If the desire is to eat the loss, what does that impact on our operations and do we have to modify any service levels. If we are not willing to modify, how much

revenue do we need? If we want to invest in the aspirational, how much revenue do we need?

Mr. Robinson shared that he has a question about the schedule process. He remembers, he thinks last year, getting the preliminary budget sometime in July. He asked if that was correct? Mr. Greeson replied no. We start developing the budget through this process now, but it is typically not released until early October. The Charter requires it to be released 60 days prior to the end of the year but we try for about 90 days in advance. He added that we spent time in July and September talking about the forecast and some of the issues we were dealing with but the complete budget document with his message was first printed in October.

Mr. Smith commented that following up on Ms. Kowalczyk's comment related to a group of citizens interested in exploring the information about the budget and where our expenses are going and where revenues are coming from. What he has seen for the past few years when this has been brought up is a group of dedicated citizens who are just interested in learning more and maybe helping if they can provide insights that maybe staff has been too close to the budget. He has always been interested in that concept and maybe this year has gotten away from us already. If there is a way to engage people who are interested throughout the rest of the summer and the budget process, he would be all for that. Mr. Greeson replied okay.

President Michael asked what kind of staff time it would take to have a committee like that. Mr. Greeson thinks it would depend on what you would want its mission to be and to what degree. Hosting a couple of meetings where we kind of dive a little deeper than we did tonight with interested citizens who sign up to do that is one thing. Tasking a group to play a significant or substantive role in some of the policy framing is a different level of tasks.

Mr. Greeson added that staff is willing to do just about anything. But the one thing that we felt was of value with the statistically valid survey is, you get away from self-selected and listening to only the voices that care to show up in a weird world right now and are comfortable in this kind of a format and you capture some broader base of opinion that you might be able to rely on as being the feelings of the public. It is striking the balance between the typical public process as we do where we invite people to the table and allow influence of smaller numbers of people and balancing that with statistic valid research that might reflect the broader will of the people.

Mr. Robinson shared that he is glad to hear Mr. Greeson use the language, statistically valid and acknowledging the possible misinterpretation of looking at data that is obtained through self-selecting groups. He thinks that is very important. He is glad to hear him talking about that. Regarding the Citizens Advisory Committee, he too has thought it was a very good idea from the first time he heard it mentioned a couple of years ago. He would urge Mr. Greeson, staff and Council to think of it as at least let us get started this year and maybe with the minimalist description provided about a couple of meetings that would enable the process to begin. We would learn probably through that itself and then perhaps

down the road we could take a more extensive step. He would say let us get started at least with the minimalist outline concept of that group.

Mr. Myers asked Mr. Robinson what minimalist outline he was referring to. He heard making presentations. Mr. Robinson replied that Mr. Greeson can probably repeat it better than he. What he recalls was a couple of meetings where they dive a little bit deeper than we did tonight, perhaps get some initial feedback from the group but, not something requiring ongoing, extensive collaboration through the entire process with the public but more superficial one. Mr. Greeson replied that makes sense to him. He thinks what would possibly be useful and maybe instructive in terms of educating the community about where we are, is you share this kind of information, you talk about some of the five-year forecast, trends and some of the budgetary pressures, some of the things we were thinking about and then have people ask some critical questions and inevitably there are always members of the public who are thinking of things we may have missed or ask questions that make us think with more clarity. So, you could create a couple of opportunities for people to do that as we are in the process. Much of this is bottoms up where the staff that are running the programs are informing directors about the needs and demands of those programs. It is not all Mr. Bartter and the Finance Department cooking it up.

Mr. Bartter asked what kind of a timeframe they would be interested in. Would we have this group reviewing the proposed budget prior to it coming to council? Usually we do not get that done until about maybe September 11th or so. He asked if it would be in the timeframe between staff finishing the proposed budget and it coming to Council.

Mr. Smith commented that his initial instincts early on were they would be a part of the conversation, if not part of the conversation from the beginning, at least a fly on the wall throughout staff's conversations internally. Maybe they are not even engaging at that point but as some point opening to questions. He thinks Mr. Greeson hit the nail on the head with that one. He thinks if you get questions from a handful or multiple handfuls of residents, you will get to the heart of what people are concerned about quickly when it comes to the city budget and what that budget provides. The timeframe, he would say as soon as possible.

Mr. Myers understands that what we have done in the past is to try and do more outreach and engagement as to how the budget works and what we spend our money on as opposed to soliciting input as to how we should spend our money. His concern with that type of a the group, say a budget advisory committee or whatever you call it, is that you tend to get people who are already engaged and have certain priorities in their own mind. They attempt to direct budget dollars towards those priorities. It would be different than say a select group of professionals: say economists and financiers and businesspeople who could help with projections. If someone could do that today, they are certainly a genius because he has been studying it for most of his life and can't figure out where we are going. He just always has concerns; you tend to get special interest people that want to be on these types of committees.

Mr. Bartter asked if we were just opening it up for a public discussion that is more informal?

Mr. Myers commented that he would prefer a public education. He raised this before but when we went to the public with an income tax increase that was the first interaction he had with Mr. Greeson. He did a marvelous job in reaching out to every possible group, including eight year olds on the street corner to give his presentation as to why, he would imagine Worthington residents were as well informed on our budget process as a result of that income tax increase as they ever have been. He is never going to wish that task on Mr. Greeson again. It is way too much time and effort, particularly with what we have going on now. It was incredibly effective to the point of a 63% approval rate. He thinks it was in large part, Mr. Greeson and staff's effort going around town and educating people, that no, we do not get money from real estate. We get money from income tax. He thinks we have come a long way. We have more people interested but that is the kind of thing he thinks would be most beneficial at this point particularly, going into very difficult times. Some people in Worthington see the income tax and may not understand just how difficult a time we are in.

Mr. Greeson requested that council give staff a little latitude to experiment and then we can adapt over time. Council has been heard. He thinks we probably need to do a little bit of both, a little bit of forecast, a little bit of education and identify some of the main sticking points kind of a conversation. Most people probably do not care what kind of paper we are buying but they want to understand what the major drivers are and what are the real choices. We are listening to this conversation and give us a little opportunity to experiment. Being frank about the community survey, if we end up having to make hard decisions, he thinks the data could be valuable at some juncture. It does help accomplish some of what folks described but it does have a cost. It can cost \$15,000 to \$20,000 depending on how you approach it. When asked if that was accurate, Ms. Stewart replied that she has not looked at it recently but was thinking it was higher than that, maybe in the \$20,000 to \$30,000 price range.

Ms. Kowalczyk stated that she has a concern that doing that kind of survey without the context of what it means, where are we and where our revenues come from. You hear people talking about my taxes pay for that, when they do not. Or they talk about, can't you give money to the schools? She thinks the idea if we are not doing a specific committee, doing a little more education. She knows Mr. Bartter has done a good job of moving us in that direction. She thinks we need to continue to do that. Having a survey asking what your preferences are without that context of here is what we are faced with and here are the resources we have to make that decision. She does not think it gives her the right comfort level to know that people are making a fully informed decision when they give you the data.

Ms. Kowalczyk clarified that she thinks that just people not understanding if you ask them which services they would prioritize, it might depend. She would feel like she would want to know. She has a lot of questions before she would answer that question.

Mr. Robinson agreed with Ms. Kowalczyk. The survey would need to be very carefully thought through when and how you do it. He would urge caution there.

Mr. Robinson shared that he would like to respond to Mr. Myers comments about the advisory group concept. He is always for educating the public. However, he thinks when it comes to city finances, there are persons in the community that would have valuable things to say to us. He knows Mr. Greeson stated that and acknowledged that in his remarks, but he would think that especially given the fluid conditions we are now living and operating in, it would be valuable to solicit feedback. Be very frank up front saying, we are trying new dialogue with the public. We can't promise that we are going to incorporate your ideas or adequately respond but we know that you are insightful and might have ideas we are blind to. So, you have a couple of meetings where you provide information and solicit feedback, if it helps, great. If it does not that is okay too. You and they would both learn and then next year we might be able to do something different and better.

Ms. Dorothy shared that she is all for getting more education out to people and she does appreciate the feedback. This is something that she has been trying to get and she thinks more influence for councilmembers during this process too. She is afraid of sublimating our responsibility to other people. But she appreciates getting more information out and getting information back. She is worried about the self-selected people but getting more information out is for the better.

Ms. Thress indicated that Mr. Bates had joined the meeting and may wish to comment. President Michael welcomed Mr. Bates and invited him to comment after first sharing his name and address for the record.

Michael Bates – 6560 Evening Street

Mr. Bates stated that he thinks Mr. Robinson got to what he wanted to say about trying something. But going back to a comment made by Mr. Myers, he thinks this budget thing is one of those items where you can do both. You can have some self-selected citizen involvement to get some communications and education going and do a statistically valid survey. There is nothing to prevent one from the other. He thinks Ms. Dorothy has some very good points as does Mr. Greeson and the rest of the team. Fantastic job on the budget presentation, Mr. Bartter but the point being is that there is an opportunity here to get some data that can be used for future decision making plus also get some direct citizen impact by having some kind of advisory group or at least have some participation by citizens in the budget process. He thanked council for the opportunity to comment.

President Michael thanked Mr. Bates for his participation and input.

In closing out this topic, Mr. Greeson shared that staff will reflect on council members thoughts and come up with a strategy to do something that strikes a balance between all the comments that were shared. He would like to think through that a little bit with Ms. Stewart and Mr. Bartter to form some more coherent thoughts. We intentionally posed

open-ended kind of issues for a reason this evening. He hopes members got that as opposed to our normal structured recommendations. On the issue of statistically valid survey, he thinks he heard a concern that the expense might be a little early or that in the absence of community education, the results might be a little stilted. Maybe we could explore how we would structure something like that and maybe have it by September. It would not inform the development of the budget he submits, but it might inform ultimate decisions. We might be able to kind of walk through exactly how that might work and have an example from another community that has used one or something like that. He asked Mr. Bartter and Ms. Stewart if they think that is a good path or will it put us too far behind in terms of getting statistically valid information and inform the budget process?

Ms. Stewart thinks we can explore more of that over the next week and touch base with council next week before going into the August recess. She is a little concerned about timing and getting that feedback at that point in the process, but why don't we reflect on it more.

Mr. Myers asked to go back to a comment he made earlier in the meeting. Generally, as to the survey or the information Mr. Greeson is soliciting, while he is not particularly optimistic that our revenue projections are going to be rosy because he doesn't think we have seen the worst of what is going to happen with COVID, it seems to him like what Mr. Greeson is asking for is a scenario, but if you had to cut a certain city service what would it be? In other words, is he anticipating that we might cut to the point where we are impacting core services?

Mr. Greeson reported that in 2009/2010 when we were faced with tough decisions on whether to increase income tax or property taxes, we had some statistically valid information that was part of the Worthington 360 process where the community rated their satisfaction with services so we knew how we were performing. Then we also had questions that were answered about the importance of those services to citizens. We had a sense of those things that were low priority and low performance and those that were high priority and high performance and had a four-quadrant analysis of kind of where we stood. That helped reinforce, he thinks for the council at the time, that many of our services were valued and were of a high priority and he thinks we even had some information about people who were willing to pay. He thinks we had a better sense when we were going into that of where the community stood in terms of their perspective on our services and what things were a priority. That is what it does. You are never going to get a perfect analysis, but it gives you an overall sense. It also can tell you where you are performing low and what are lesser priorities over others.

Ms. Kowalczyk asked if we feel we need this to make budget decisions this year? Mr. Greeson replied maybe. To Mr. Myers point, he is not sure we know the extent of the impacts we are going to have, and certainly, if this downturn moves into the next fiscal year and has significant impacts in 2021, then we would need it. Mr. Myers thinks next year is going to be the critical year. He thinks we will get through this year but next year. . . Mr. Greeson reported that every budget lays the ground work for the next one and that is the way, he thinks, particularly when you are budgeting in an economic downturn, you

have to make decisions now in the upcoming fiscal fall that help prepare us for different scenarios in 2021. Both with prudent fiscal actions as well as maybe development of information.

Ms. Stewart shared that she has been looking at survey information, particularly statistically valid survey information as being beneficial if we get to the point where we must cut the services we currently provide. If we are in the mode of just not being able to add but we can continue to do what we have been doing, it may be more challenging but we can find a way to make it work. Maybe we can make those decisions without the survey information but if we get to where we have to reduce and cut certain services, she guesses it is a question of whether council is prepared to make those decisions yourselves or would you like to have some statistically valid input from the community as to what they may not be happy to give us but what they would miss the least.

President Michael commented that we will plan to review that next week and have deeper background to come up with a conclusion on whether it is a good or bad thing. She is looking forward to staff getting the input together and for council to be able to have something deeper to look at next week.

Mr. Myers thinks that highlights the point he is trying to make is it does not seem that we are quite there yet. That we must cut those core services. We do not know what is going to happen next year and we may come to that point. What kind of lead time do we need if we are faced in the future with making those decisions? Are you telling him that he needs to make those decisions in this budget? That is the information that he needs. How close to critical are we?

President Michael thinks this is going to be an item for the agenda next week. Mr. Greeson thanked President Michael and City Council for this freewheeling but beneficial conversation. He greatly appreciates it. We are thinking out loud about how we want to handle this, and he thinks it is prudent and a good thing to do early in the process.

Mr. Greeson shared that we have had a lot of COVID-19 conversations recently with the mask ordinance and you heard from Dr. Roberts. He just wanted to put that as a placeholder on the agenda in the event we needed to address anything. He does not believe there is anything new to share. However, he does want to forecast one thing that we may bring to you as a discussion item next week. Our Worthington ReBoot team, which is being led by Mr. McCorkle and involves the not for profit partners as well as some business stakeholders in the community has been evaluating the conditions of some of our businesses and trying to ascertain whether a business grant program would be beneficial. We are thinking through whether it would be useful to redirect some of the economic development incentives we have unspent this year at this point, towards a small grant program aimed at helping particularly some of our more vulnerable small businesses. That would be separate from utilization of the CARES Act dollars, which I'm going to ask Mr. Bartter to touch on.

Mr. Bartter reported that last Monday council passed a resolution requesting the CARES Act funding. He submitted that paperwork on Tuesday to both the OBM and the County Auditor and both have confirmed received and accepted to have all the necessary requirements. They sent those funds for distribution and we should be receiving them sometime this week. We received additional guidance from the treasury, further confirming that first responder payroll could be an eligible expense against CARES Act funds. At this point we continue to recommend that the full amount of the funding be utilized to offset first responding payroll and then we would set up if council so desires or as we will discuss next week, any business grant program utilizing economic development dollars that would not be tied to being a federal sub award of the CARES Act dollars and all of the compliance that goes with that .

Information Item

- Update on Coronavirus/COVID-19

Mr. Greeson shared that he had nothing to report on COVID. When it is appropriate, he will have a quick other update.

Mr. Robinson commented that it has been roughly a week since we implemented the mask ordinance. He asked if there were any reports or anecdotes, he could provide in terms of implementation and so forth. Mr. Greeson replied no. We have referred a couple of business complaints to Columbus Public Health for sanitarians to follow-up on. He is not aware of any negative reports in that regard. Mr. Lindsey may be able to speak to whether the governor's actions resulted in consistency with our ordinance. At this point, he is not aware of any problems with our ordinance implementation.

Mr. Lindsey reported the easiest and most obvious difference between the State Department of Health and the ordinance we passed is their age for children is 10, whereas ours was 6. So, you have a question if somebody is 8 and not wearing a mask, are they in violation of our ordinance or is that a matter of home rule? That is the only clear gap, although he has not spent much time evaluating the issue particularly because the issue would primarily be against business and warnings come first before civil enforcement. That is where we are at this point. He does owe council some revisions. We will be back on the topic of masks next Monday night. He will try to address this issue with more clarity next week.

Ms. Kowalczyk shared that she noticed another conflict where the State's orders do more in terms of religious entities. She had received some feedback from residents that ours was not sufficient and she is curious of his insight on that issue. Mr. Lindsey replied that he has not drilled down that research in terms of level of comfort and enforcement and how best to address that. It also relates back to this question of whether there is a valid rule issue. As we differentiate between the two, home rule in a general way is a question of whether state law permits something or prohibits something. It is also a question of the uniformity of that application. He has not seen on the listserv of Ohio Municipal Lawyers the question is to whether an order that is intended to only address initially seven but later

expanded to be 12 counties, would meet the uniformity test for purposes of home rule analysis. Those are a couple of issues he has to look at here in the next several days to be able to answer more correctly whether or not he thinks we can differentiate and whether or not there is a desire to leave ours in place if we feel the state orders are sufficient. The enforcement of the state orders is by the local public health agency. It would once again be Columbus Public Health tasked with enforcing the state order as well as our orders. He thought of first contacting Columbus Public Health and discuss the issue. His sense is the council felt it was important to adopt the mask ordinance in the timeframe we did in large part to make sure we are sending a clear message we believe it is important for people to be wearing masks regardless of the level of enforcement of the benefits of masks protecting others. He believes council would like to keep it in place even if it could only be enforced to the level of the state order. If there are any thoughts, reflections about this that point him in a different direction, please share. Otherwise that will be his intent.

President Michael commented that the topic will be addressed again at our next meeting, to which Mr. Lindsey replied yes.

Mr. Greeson shared that members will likely be contacted by either Ms. Trego or Mrs. Thress as they work to schedule several hours of your time in August. We had a conference call today with The Ohio State University Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. We had a great conversation with them about where to start in terms of foundational training on racial equity, implicit bias, and kind of how public policy can create disparate outcomes. They recommended one of their trainings as a beginning point in our journey, which will be about three hours. He recommended beginning with Council and Senior leadership (the department director's team) and we are going to be seeking dates that will work for everyone. OSU Kirwan will submit a proposal for us to move forward. As we get more information and more details he will gladly share it.

When asked by President Michael if it would be virtual, Mr. Greeson replied that he thinks they are adept at offering the information in a virtual format. In fact, he thinks they are required to by the university at this point. While we can accommodate a number of people and have the technology for some of us to be in a room in a safe social distancing way, the trainers will be virtual so the numbers will be limited. Council and leadership provide an ideal number of participants given the virtual format. President Michael commented that she is excited that we are moving forward in this direction. She thinks we could all use the training. Ms. Kowalczyk interjected her thanks as well. She really appreciates it and thinks members will learn a lot. Others agreed.

REPORT OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Ms. Kowalczyk commented that the Partnership did put out cool bandannas with neighborhoods on them for sale that you can wear in Old Worthington. She thinks some of the shops have them as well, but you can order them from the Partnership's website. She thinks they have some left. President Michael confirmed that she has seen them in the downtown area as well.

Mr. Robinson shared that he would like to take this opportunity since we can speak to the whole of council to call attention to the email that he sent out containing several proposals for council related to law enforcement. It is his hope that he can speak with each of them this week and let him make his case as to why he thinks they are important issues for them to address in a timely manner. He would also like to hear their ideas. If there is a sufficient favorable reaction, he would urge council to consider discussing these matters next week with the idea of instigating some form of action that we could undertake now and during the long August recess, he thinks it is about seven weeks long this year. He thinks it would be very desirable for us to demonstrate action now beyond the resolution we have passed. He thinks it would be good for the community to hear from us as well as those that have been protesting and those seeking some kind of action from the council. He thanked members for checking out his proposals and hopefully sharing your thoughts with him if they can talk this coming week.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

ADJOURNMENT

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

President Michael declared the meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

/s/ D. Kay Thress
Clerk of Council

*APPROVED by the City Council, this
8th day of September, 2020.*

/s/ Bonnie D. Michael
Council President