



# City Council Agenda

## Minutes

Monday, October 11, 2021 at 7:30 pm

6550 N. High Street, Worthington, Ohio 43085

### 1. Call to Order

**Minutes:**

Worthington City Council met in-person in Regular Session on Monday, October 11, 2021. President Michael called the meeting to order at or about 7:30 p.m.

### 2. Roll Call

**Minutes:**

**Members Present:** Peter Bucher, Rachael Dorothy, Beth Kowalczyk, Scott Myers, David Robinson, Doug Smith and Bonnie Michael

**Member(s) Absent:**

**Also Present:** City Manager Matt Greeson, Assistant City Manager Robyn Stewart, Assistant City Manager Economic Development Director David McCorkle, Law Director Tom Lindsey, Director of Finance Scott Bartter, Director of Service & Engineering Dan Whited, Director of Parks & Recreation Darren Hurley, Chief of Fire & EMS Mark Zambito, Clerk of Council D. Kay Thress

**There was one member of the public in attendance.**

### 3. Pledge of Allegiance

**Minutes:**

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

## Reports of City Officials

### 4. Discussion Item(s)

#### a. Overview - Proposed 2022 Operating Budget & Five-Year Forecast

**Minutes:**

Mr. Greeson explained how this is the beginning of the budgeting season and the 2022 Operating Budget and 2022-2026 Capital Improvement Program documents were distributed recently. Tonight staff will provide highlights of the operating budget and an overview of the 5-year financial forecast. The City's charter requires that the City Manager confer with the department heads, and

submit to the City Council a budget at least sixty days prior to the beginning of each budget year. The operating budget allocates funds for the daily services that the City provides. We know through our survey work that citizens place a high priority on maintaining the high quality of our services and this budget focuses on the maintenance of existing services. Staff will highlight some "Controlled Growth" in the budget and an overview of trends that will make it difficult to project revenues in the future, including work-from-home ramifications and continued impacts on the Parks and Recreation Department. Several of the services we intend to maintain include fire prevention and protection, emergency medical services, community center programming, economic development, and grants to our non-profit partners that help accomplish community goals. Additionally, provide recreation services for all ages, refuse collection, leaf collection, police services, and snow and ice removal.

Mr. Bartter showed a chart that illustrates where money is being expended in the operating budget, primarily in public safety at \$15 million including Fire, Police, and dispatching services, followed by Parks, Service and Engineering, and General Administration. Our services are primarily provided by people, so 50% of the budget goes towards personal services which are wages, followed by health insurance and pensions. Overall, 75% of the budget goes towards personnel expenses. Just under 25% is for contractual expenses, such as RITA to collect income taxes, Local Waste Services for refuse, and NRECC for dispatching. A small amount is spent on equipment, supplies, and materials in the operating budget. When talking about controlled growth, with this proposed budget it is just 2.34% over 2021 original appropriations and -1.74% under 2021 amended appropriations due to a number of additional General Fund appropriations that were made in 2021.

Mr. Greeson highlighted how over the past 14 years, the City government has had opportunities to shrink through a series of reorganizations, position reductions, and outsourcing. We are over 10 positions fewer than we were 14 years ago. However, service demands have not decreased and remain high. This is a year where staff feels it is necessary to invest in the organization. There are areas where because of the growing demands and complexities of tasks, we are lacking the personnel to support them. He feels we can afford to include a few strategic investments into our workforce. This includes an investment in our EMS program, the Service Department, and our finance and HR operations which support all of our organization. We have also added some consulting dollars, which can be easier to scale back versus hiring full-time employees. The budget shows an increase in the refuse collection of \$225,000, a 2.5% wage increase for non-union personnel, a 2.5% wage increase for fire, a 0% increase in health insurance costs, and increased funding for income tax refunds.

Mr. Bartter overviewed how the City pays for services, breaking down our revenue for the operating budget, which is highly dependent on income tax

revenue at 70% of the 2022 estimated revenue, followed by property taxes as the second-largest revenue source.

Mr. Robinson brought up how several years ago in the campaign that 75% was the mantra amongst all candidates. He asked if income tax projections of 70% were a better projection. Mr. Bartter explained that 70% is about where it has always been. Back around 2019, when we moved Parks and Rec revenue from the Revolving Fund into the General Fund, it lowered that amount a little bit, but it has pretty consistently been 70%.

Mr. Bartter explained that in August 2021, the year-to-date collections for income taxes were above estimates by \$2,785,469, or 15%. If we stay above 15%, we could hit a \$30 million income tax collection in Worthington.

Mr. Robinson asked for clarification that these numbers do not include federal funds. Mr. Bartter replied that they are straight income tax.

Mr. Bartter presented that the 2022 estimate is set at just over \$28.5 million, which is a 7.63% increase from the 2021 estimate. The reason for this is the nature of why we are so far up right now, we are seeing a lot of success from our existing businesses. He would be more optimistic if we were seeing increased withholding from new jobs. For 2023-2026 we are using a 2.5% growth number, which is close to our five-year average of 2.52%.

Mr. Robinson asked at what point some of the new projects going on we would begin to see the realization of income tax revenues. Mr. Bartter replied that he did not know, it may be in 2022-2023 depending on when employees begin working.

Mr. Bartter detailed that the 2021 increase is a result of the success of current businesses, but there is a question of whether they will continue their record of success into 2022. The other big question is the impact of work from home and whether people will be moving to a hybrid or full work from home schedule. Some of our major employers are having people work hybrid schedules. We are fortunate we have some industries that do not do well with work from home. There is also the refund issue from the state with people being able to file for a refund of taxes paid in 2021.

President Michael asked about an estimate of the people who work elsewhere but work from home in Worthington. She wondered if there was a way to figure out how the offset would work. Mr. Bartter replied not that he was aware of. Right now RITA is holding any refunds submitted for 2020 depending on the outcome of the Buckeye Institute litigation. Right now they are at 25 pending refunds at \$75,000. It could be way more, or it could be in line with estimates.

Mr. Bartter noted that we traditionally split refunds 80/20 between the General Fund and CIP. For 2022, we added \$160,000 to the General Fund and then split it 80/20 so the General Fund bears the weight of the full expenditure. The refunds are not going to directly impact the estimates, it is going to impact expenditures. The next category of revenues is Parks and Recreation fees, estimated at \$2.2 million in 2022, which is a 7% decrease from the 2021

estimate. In 2021 we are currently tracking down 57%. We also estimate charges for services including 2022 EMS transport fees of \$650k, Fire Protection Service of \$500k, and Riverlea Police protection at \$83,234. In 2021 for property taxes, we are up 14% because there was a 2020 reappraisal showing an increase in collections. In 2022, we are projecting a minimal 2.0% increase with no appraisal or increase. The Gas Tax and MMVLT we estimate collections of \$1.195 million, which is no change from 2021. Looking at the revenue side of the 5-year forecast, we see a bit of a spike in 2021 indicating the increased income tax revenues, and then a slight decrease in 2022 before there being gradual growth into 2026. For expenditures, you will see that 2020 was a significant drop in expenditures due to COVID measures that were taken. It increases greatly in 2021 from additional appropriations and there is no relief from CARES Act money that hit personnel lines. We are estimating a decrease in 2022, which gradually increases through 2026. He showed the 5-year forecast for the General Fund Balance with the 35% balance floor indicated on the chart. He anticipates we will finish 2021 exceeding 60%, and then moving forward hover around the 50% mark for the entirety of the forecast. Some potential modifications include a 16% decrease in the NRECC contract, a 5% increase from the Columbus Board of Health contract, and the FOP contract that has not yet been negotiated for 2022. For public input and information, we have published a This Week News article for October 14th, the Balancing Act budget simulator tool has been updated for 2022, and we still have the budget education videos that were created last year. There are also future Council meetings discussing the budget through November 15th, overviewing the budget documents, departmental budgets, and outside group funding.

Mr. Greeson followed up on Mr. Robinson's earlier question about projects and when they might come online, the office building for the Worthington Gateway project will not get underway until the spring, so we will not see that in 2022. High North is dependent upon leasing success, we would be optimistic for 2024 for the first of those buildings.

Mr. Myers asked about the uptick in inflation and supply chain disruptions that may affect our purchasing. Mr. Bartter responded that he looked back at expenditure history and we are at about 2.25% and we utilized that moving forwards.

Ms. Kowalczyk commented that she appreciated the comments about how we have been operating a very lean staff, she sees what is proposed is restoring City staff at a level to do the best job we can to provide city services. She thinks that is an important characterization of this proposed budget. She is pleased to see there is a proposal for investment in the EMS and some of the things we have been talking about in terms of addressing some of the runs and how we can address people's needs better. Also, the idea of addressing digital communications is important and she has heard questions about how we can do better. She expressed she is interested in the intention for the American Rescue

Plan Act dollars. Mr. Bartter explained that the CIP calls for using those dollars to fund waterline projects, we will have more information on that next week. Infrastructure is an allowable expenditure. Ms. Kowalczyk suggested that in terms of engaging the public, she has had some conversations about how people can express their interest in the things being suggested in terms of the budget process. She wondered if there is some way to put out to the public what the budget is, what things are important so that we can have a better understanding from their perspective when discussing these issues. Mr. Greeson explained how engagement is rooted in all of our plans within the CIP and some of what we have learned from visioning in the Operating. People have the ability to call-in, or show up to ask questions and get answers, and Council gets to hear that discussion.

Mr. Myers commented that with the income tax increases this year, there will be some questions or a push towards moving projects up or paying cash for projects that we would otherwise bond. He asked if staff could be prepared to discuss possible projects that would be applicable to and give a recommendation on whether that would be an advisable course of action. Mr. Greeson explained how there are three things we need to consider and forecast for Council. If you look at the CIP, it relies on the ordinance requirement to transfer 20% of the income tax and it is built around that revenue primarily. To accomplish the projects in the plan, relying on that amount of revenue, we are showing about \$6 million more in debt across the five-year plan. One consideration may be to think about whether we can incur less debt. There would also be a conversation about whether there are critical one-time expenses to invest in. Then there is also capacity and what we can get done in terms of our ability to manage it. Those things will need to be discussed throughout this fall.

Mr. Bucher asked if Council could receive information from the Balancing Act tool and the budget education videos and how many people are viewing them. That would be a useful dataset as we think through future discussions. He also asked about the FOP contract and whether that would be done at the end of the year or whether staff could estimate when it would be done. Mr. Greeson responded that there was not a specific timeframe, but he would believe that will be negotiated into the new year.

Mr. Robinson explained how when staff talks about the issue of debt if there could be an inclusion of a primer of our philosophy of when it is wise to incur debt or not, and whether the debt is a bad thing even at low-interest rates.

Ms. Dorothy explained that back when our fund balances were not so rosy, we did not fund our CIP budget by diverting money into the General Fund and we never repaid that. She feels we owe some one-time money into the CIP. She is a proponent of the low-interest rates, borrowing more to keep investing in improving our infrastructure.

## b. Joint Recreation District (JRD)

### Minutes:

Mr. Greeson explained how in July after submitting additional research that was conducted by staff and answering a series of questions proposed, staff presented on the topic of the JRD. We included at that time some of the work that was done prior to July over the past several years, including the Worthington Pools Master Plan, a legal analysis by Bricker and Eckler, staff's research memorandum, answers to questions posed by Council, and a draft resolution to create a JRD. Since then, Councilmembers have had the opportunity to ask additional questions, and those were answered primarily by SwimInc, and those answers are in the Council packet for this week. The goal of tonight's discussion is to gauge whether Council is ready to move forward with the next steps. If Council authorizes him tonight, the next steps would be to present similar material to the school board and the SwimInc board. If the school board desires to move forward, we could then work together by creating something like a nominating committee to help collaborate on identifying potential board candidates. We would then finalize the resolution and bring back the adoption of the resolution and appoint the board members at a future meeting. He does not intend to go over all of the materials in the packet tonight but is open to questions and further discussion on the JRD topic.

Ms. Thress read in a comment that was received earlier in the day that is to be read into the record. This email was from Michael Sirosky which read,

*"Dear Council,*

*I would like to provide some personal thoughts on the upcoming discussion about the joint recreational district discussion as mentioned in the upcoming City Council agenda for October 11, 2021. I first would like to commend the cities and council's efforts to assist in a solution to make sure that we don't lose a valuable community resource.*

*The main question I have with going forward with the Joint Recreational District (JRD) is if this will limit the city options on how this community resource integrates with our portfolio of park and recreation resources?*

*As mentioned during the city's vision processes last year, our citizens greatly appreciate our parks and recreation resources. As a citizen I would love to see reinvestment of the Worthington Pools to be a city managed facility providing that provides our community with outdoor pools, additional indoor pool and potentially an auxiliary fitness center.*

*If we achieve this goal of a city managed facility, then we would benefit our citizens who use these resources while being responsible to the taxpayers. One membership would solve the issue were citizens had to choose between memberships. Financial hardships exist in our community, and some citizens can only subscribe to one today which can limit how a family can be part of our community. A city managed facility would save financial overhead in streamlining business operations such as budget, human resources, facilities,*

*and membership management. Managing these resources at a city level would also reduce the impact of facility maintenance and better delivering the resources need by our community.*

*If the facility continues to have a weight room and could be further designed into a larger fitness facility, then would provide more of citizens access to walkable city resources benefiting the quality of life and environment as highlighted in our vision.*

*My concern is that if we proceed with a JRD then we might end up in the current situation, where we have a community resource that is managed by a third party where it doesn't fully maximize the fullest impact and benefit to our community. It might be better to explore a joint venture and see what can be achieved between the city and school district without creating a new entity. I would also be open to a resolution for a JRD that designated the city as the managing entity, though I don't know if that is a legal option.*

*Opportunities like this in our community will only occur every 30-40 years. We should work to build solutions that will fulfill our community's needs for the future and while still being responsible fiduciaries of the public's money.*

*Sincerely, Michael Siroskey"*

Mr. Greeson brought up that Mr. Robinson asked about other pools in the region and who operates municipal pools and examples of places that might be considered non-municipal such as our pools. He had some research completed that was not included in the packet. There are a number of municipal pools, such as Upper Arlington, Westerville, Dublin, Bexley, and Grandview where the City operates the pools. There are examples of JRDs such as Granville and New Albany. Powell Pool is a non-profit swim club. Westerville JC's pool dates back to the 1950s similarly. The Northland Swimclub is a swim club. YMCAs have indoor and outdoor pools around the region. The Foxboro pool in Gahanna is a non-profit. It is a real mixture of ways to operate pools and there are a number of suburban cities that operate pools and then there are different examples.

Mr. Smith said that he likes Mr. Siroskey's recommendation of a recreation package if we go the JRD route and wondered if there is a way we could do a dual program, "Super Pass". Mr. Hurley replied that this is something we have talked about with Worthington Pools, but there are a lot of challenges to doing that with facilities that have different operating routines. We could probably reach some sort of agreement, but there would be challenges with reconciling revenues. It is mostly logistical and determines what percentages of expenses would be held by each agency. President Michael explained how we have half the users of the pool that are in the greater school district and outside of the City of Worthington. She wonders how we would reconcile that with a "Super Pass". Mr. Hurley replied that we have discussed similar concepts with the libraries and their service and tax bases are different than ours, so there would need to be some decision on the numbers in the agreement. It may seem easy at first glance, but there are some challenges when you look at it closer. Mr.

Smith shared he has worked with JRDs around the state and he likes the idea and it is more attractive by the day. There is oversight from Council to oversee the process and committee. SwimInc's issues are from lacking the resources, otherwise, it is efficient as it is operating. They lack resources and the JRD provides a good way to get the funding that they need.

President Michael mentioned that a lot of people do not realize the total expense involved. When it takes \$17 million just to upgrade the two pools, that is a lot of money that can be challenging, especially if the City takes it on, that becomes a budgetary challenge. We have limited resources, so it becomes a challenge how we fund it.

Ms. Dorothy expressed that she agrees with many of the things already said and the challenge for the pools right now is capital dollars and renewing their facilities. In the long run, it is the operating and general fund paying people, she is really happy with the third-party non-profit operating the pool. They have done a really exceptional job operating the pools over the years. They have also put a significant amount of investments into the facilities, however, nothing lasts forever and they do not have the money to totally upgrade the facilities. She expressed how she is happy with the third party and how they have been operating the pools.

Mr. Robinson explained how we all support the pools and could not imagine Worthington without the pools. His questions are not meant to be anything other than that. He asked two questions, first relates to whether we have done our homework, it seems we have been presented one option moving forward. He asks himself what he would say to a resident that asks him a basic question about if we go the JRD route and there is a levy, how would he respond it would cost a household annually. In comparison, if the City takes over the outdoor pool only, what would that cost a household. He has no idea and he wondered if anyone knows what the relative costs are under those two options. We as Council are being asked to make a decision on this and his point is that we do not understand a lot of the basics and he is not comfortable with a decision to move forward with the JRD without an alternative being articulated and discussed. Ms. Dorothy replied that when we had a joint meeting with the school board two years ago we had discussions about the numbers and costs and the JRD board would come back with firm numbers on what they would want for a levy. We do have numbers from two years ago. President Michael explained that the other part we are running into is that it is not fair to say just taking care of the outdoor pool and then forget the natatorium. Both sides need each other. There would be questions on how the indoor pool would be taken care of. Mr. Robinson explained that would presumably be a school-managed facility. These are basic management questions about how best to operate a complex facility that has essentially two different operational units and user groups. That is his underlying concern, we are creating a complex entity if it did not already exist in some form, we would probably not imagine creating this kind of an entity. He



does not feel like we have looked at alternatives and the number and considered what it would mean for our city. We have talked about broad concepts and have not talked about the dollar realities. Secondly, he has talked to a couple of school board members in the last month and has asked them if they have been talking about the pools. Both members replied that they have not talked about it at all since the last public joint meeting. When he told them we were pretty far down the road on a JRD, they both expressed surprise. One implored him that we do not get too far ahead of them because it would be embarrassing for them if that was the case. They want a small working group of board members and council members, and he likes that idea. This is the kind of decision that should be discussed in general terms by elected officials. He knows that Mr. Greeson has proposed that staff would go and present to the board members, but what exactly would staff present, would there be a discussion about the real options structurally and organizationally between our two entities. That is the kind of discussion we have before going down the road of the JRD being our only viable option.

President Michael asserted that from her Parks and Recreation background and the years she has worked in aquatics and aquatic management when there are indoor and outdoor pools in the same facility, it has traditionally been managed by one entity. Take the City of Westerville for example, all of their programs are in one place, that is why she would be hard-pressed to find models where you have a natatorium and an outdoor pool on the same premise, operated by two separate entities and funding sources. She does not know if she has ever heard of something like that existing.

Mr. Robinson replied that is an excellent point and is the kind of stuff that we ought to consider. His level of grasping what this really means and the options are not clear.

Mr. Smith shared that being communicative with the school board would be helpful since it has been so long since they have had discussions on this. That has been the problem all along that they have not taken more of an active role in this facility. He believes that a group like the JRD may be able to navigate this financially and politically in a way that gets the best of both worlds. Mr. Robinson is right that we should engage with the school board more and have an in-depth conversation.

President Michael explained that if there is a presentation at the school board meeting by Mr. Greeson, that opens the discussion which is needed. We have been talking about having a presentation and that may be a decent next move. Mr. Robinson confirmed that would be great.

Mr. Myers stated that we can wait and kick the can down the road a little bit further and the pool will crumble a little more and it will be even more expensive to fix it than it is today. Two years and seven days ago we were presented with three options, the argument that we have not considered alternative solutions is something that he does not understand.

Ms. Dorothy totally agreed with Mr. Myers. She thought we had come to an agreement with the school board at the school board meeting to explore this idea and get it going and then the pandemic happened. She has expressed dismay privately to Mr. Greeson about how we did not move on it during the whole year of 2020 and it was teed up as a priority of the Council to move on. We have had a agreement with the school board and school staff to move forward on the JRD. It was something we thought we had agreed to use this mechanism so that we could provide funding.

Mr. Robinson asked at the last joint meeting what was the outcome and did we agree as a Council and school board to pursue the JRD and if so, why have we not. It is his understanding we left that meeting in a still exploratory state. Mr. Greeson explained that the JRD was discussed but we still needed to do more work on it. He has been providing this information all along, but he has not presented it to them formally but he would be glad to do that. He agrees that for quite some time we have narrowed what we believe is the option, this has been in the public domain for quite a while and he believes that the schools have been interested in partnering in full exploration of this. Mr. Robinson asked what was meant by the statement that over time we have narrowed the options. Mr. Greeson responded that of the solutions available and articulated in the Bricker and Eckler memo, the alternative that best provided the opportunity for our entities to work together was the JRD. Mr. Robinson asked who the "we" is that narrowed the options. Mr. Greeson replied that Council has narrowed the options.

Mr. Myers explained that we have discussed this on multiple occasions in Council meetings, at a retreat, we have been presented with options, and many Councilmembers have expressed their support for a JRD on more than one occasion. He asked if it is possible to have a combined creation of the JRD and ballot measure. Mr. Lindsey responded that the creation is of the two bodies, being Council and the school board, and then the body created for the JRD board would be the one to put the levy on the ballot. There have been times where JRDs have been created so that if the levies fail, then the JRD is dissolved. President Michael explained that JRDs can also engage in other ways of raising money such as grants, fundraisers, and donations. Mr. Lindsey replied that the JRD essentially has the same powers as Council as it relates to recreational facilities.

Mr. Myers brought up the issue of control over the JRD would be expressed through our enabling legislation, including who is appointed, how they are appointed, what their terms are, and could also include special provisions. Mr. Lindsey explained that it is clear from the statute that the creation of the JRD board is done through the identical passage of resolutions by the enabling bodies. The specific ability to limit or control is not as clearly spelled out in the statute but could be done through the City and schools agreeing on how that structure is formulated. Until Council and the school board come to some

understanding about whether they want a JRD and what the terms are, the drafted resolution is just a template. Most of the control is through the ability to appoint the terms of those members which gives you an opportunity to re-evaluate the appointment or replacement of somebody. Mr. Myers explained how the pools are an asset to the community that needs to be protected and we have discussed options on how to do that going forward. The City itself does not have the financial ability to fill the \$17 million gap, the JRD would be able to expand the reach beyond the City, to those who utilize the pool. The management of the pools would be where it belongs with SwimInc, who are dedicated professionals that could analyze their current needs and the political appetite for a tax levy, and they could put it on the ballot to carry it forward. The JRD is really the only and best option for us to pursue and he would be in full support of Mr. Greeson approaching the school district to begin conversations and to create legislation to create such a district.

Ms. Kowalczyk agreed with Mr. Myers and supports this initiative. She was one of the Councilmembers who volunteered to flesh out the details and be a conduit, we have brought this matter several times. She said that the research that has been done is comprehensive and well done. We have a tremendous amount of information and she views us taking a leadership role moving this forward and the next step for us is to say we are taking this recommendation of the JRD and propose it to the schools and take it from there. She agrees with the rationale behind the JRD and agrees with the process that has been laid out.

Mr. Bucher agreed and it is time to engage the schools again with a presentation and a joint meeting may be beneficial along with an update on the different options that have been overviewed.

President Michael explained that she was hearing a consensus for Mr. Greeson to present to the school board on the JRD.

Mr. Greeson said that he wants to make sure the school has all of the information that the Council has and that we continue to build that information, including Mr. Robinson's questions along with numbers we have prepared in the past. This model has merit, but we are not at a point of no return, we are at the point of initiating a more formal outreach to formally move forward with this. There are opportunities to modify resolutions, concepts, and to ask questions to dig in further.

President Michael expressed that it is time to reach out and give information that we already have to the school board and get their thoughts. We have discussed it so much in Council, it is time to see where the school board is. Mr. Greeson clarified that he has heard it articulated that it is our desire to pursue a JRD, we have drafted a resolution, and done the research, and would like to go down the path of developing a JRD with them. They may have lots of questions and their own ideas, and he would bring that back to Council for more dialogue. Mr. Greeson suggested that in the interest of diplomacy with the school board that views this as a two-step process where we first supply them with all the

information we have and then Mr. Greeson seeks an audience with the school board to present to them the JRD and where we are at and not go so far as saying we are drafting or close to drafting a resolution. He believes that would enable them to feel like full participants, rather than presenting it as a fait accompli from our side. Mr. Greeson replied that these things only work when we work together. Mr. Myers said that we need both sides working, but our position is clear that our preference is if the board is inclined, to go the JRD route.

### **c. Parks Foundation Presentation and Update**

#### **Minutes:**

Mr. Hurley explained how he has Ms. Thornton with him tonight to overview the parks foundation presentation, and thanks to Ms. DeNoewer the Parks and Recreation Commission chair for her role with this. The Parks and Recreation Commission has been behind pushing this forward and staff did a presentation to them recently as to the progress that we have been making. The Parks Master plan from back in 2017 brought the idea of a parks foundation forward and there was a funding section in that plan that this might be one avenue to explore. Since then, staff has researched the concept and learned as much information as possible on how a park foundation would work from Worthington. Since then the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan was created in 2019, and one of the challenges with that is that many of the projects were included but not scoped extensively, and there is over \$4.3 million in projects that will be a challenge to fund moving forward. Those two things have created some enthusiasm but created a funding challenge. Thanks to the City Council, we have made some good progress on our Parks Master Plan, there were about 100 projects identified and we have 20% either completed or started upon in some fashion. We are mostly through the 11 highest priority projects, but there is still a long way to go. Similarly, with the Bike and Ped Master Plan, we are only just now starting to work through those projects and COVID played a role in that. There is a lot of potential there but also a lot of challenges.

Ms. Thornton described how parks foundations are known across the state and there are many benefits to having them. This includes additional fundraising capacity, abilities to serve beyond the traditional scope of parks and recreation capacities, can support staff, and provide flexibility. We often go after grants and government agencies cannot always go after grants, so a foundation can act as a fiscal agent for those. She overviewed some of the foundations found in Ohio that hold endowments through the Columbus Foundation. She showed numbers that are approximate from her talking to various departments and gathering information over the past year or two. They give an idea of how much can be raised, how much can be kept in an endowment, and how much can be spent annually. Gahanna has done really well since it was created in 2008, they have an endowment of about \$230,000 and then spends annually in certain

years up to \$400,000. Westerville is another and every year they spend about \$30,000 in trails alone. New Albany has just begun the process and is not going through the Columbus Foundation and has raised \$300,000 in a year. She imagines that Council is curious as to what the foundation would do and how it differs from the Parks Department in general. The foundation would focus primarily on fundraising and could be an additional advisory board. They can get access to private funds and act as a fiscal agent for grant applications. They would also accept fiscal responsibility and financial risk, so it would not fall on the City. Depending on the agreement with the foundation, if they were to dissolve for any reason, all of their funding accumulated would then pass to the City. Parks and Recreation would then own all land and property, and be able to focus on programming and project planning. We would assist with goal setting, working closely with the foundation, and function primarily based on City funding. Mr. Hurley noted that Parks and Recreation Commission members would most likely be appointed to the parks foundation board, so there would be overlap there.

Ms. Thornton overviewed the steps that would need to be taken to create the foundation. This would include a memorandum of understanding, determining the board structure and appointments, creating guidelines for giving, then there would be the filing process, initiation of a fund through the Columbus Foundation with \$10,000 of seed money, and the creation of a 501(c)3. She believes it would be in our best interest to associate with the Columbus Foundation initially, though that could be reassessed later. Other issues to consider include staff time, the initial start-up costs such as legal and filing fees, enlisting of financial advisors, and accounts, are among some of the activities to consider. We would need to explore these things further as we currently just have a high level of understanding.

President Michael noted that the Columbus Foundation, if you have \$10,000 you can start there and have their 501(c)3, but they could not necessarily be the person to apply for grants. So you can start a fund with the Columbus Foundation, and then once your 501(c)3 is up and running, your funds could transfer. A foundation board could have some sub things to account for, but the accounting could be broken out depending on how fundraising goes.

Mr. Robinson thanked everyone for moving this forward. It is a great idea and there are many residents who love our natural places and would enjoy contributing to a fund that would perpetuate what we offer. He would think that the broad success of this would depend upon there being clarity of mission and exciting projects. He is all for moving forward with this as rapidly as possible.

Mr. Myers shared how he has been a donor to a couple of these already and he is excited about this. He questioned whether the foundation would charge a fee.

Ms. Thornton replied that they did not to their understanding and made money off the interest. There was no discussion of fees. Mr. Myers asked if we are permitted to make donations as a city, and if not, how would we raise money

before the 501(c)3 is in place. Ms. Thornton explained that Gahanna held a fundraiser. We have a Park Improvement Fund currently in Worthington, so we have a way to take that money in and put it back out. She sees we would hold a fundraiser for something with vision, such as a specific project, and then donate and expend the money to the foundation to start a foundation. So we do have a vehicle to do this. Mr. Hurley said we have already had a meeting, but we are really on the contractual side with the Columbus Foundation.

Ms. Kowalzyk conveyed this is a wonderful opportunity and she appreciates all the work that has been put into this. She explained how she sits on a foundation board, and they have staff that administers and makes proposals for grants.

She asked if these other foundations have staff and whether that has been considered yet. Mr. Hurley replied that he is not aware of any that have their own paid staff, there is some support given by the City, but it is typically people with the foundation who have a lot of passion and do that work. Ms. Thornton said that Toledo Metroparks and a few others have hired people to work on the foundational work, but it depends on the size and scope. That is a question that needs to be answered moving forward. Ms. Kowalczyk asked about the granting out of funds and if the primary purpose is to grant out funds for City projects, or if this is open to other potential grant applications for other projects in the City.

Mr. Hurley explained that it has mainly been scoped for City projects and initiatives, we have a backlog of those. There is the potential for other area organizations and we could develop into that. However, that would create additional bandwidth and the need for staff to facilitate those undertakings. Ms. Thornton explained that when looking at providing scholarships for people in the community who could not afford a membership or students who wanted to do some of our programmings. That may be a possibility. Ms. Kowalczyk expressed she likes that idea. Mr. Hurley explained how you can underprice for the people who cannot afford it, and provide grants and scholarships for those who can't afford it while increasing the bottom line through that approach.

Mr. Bucher conveyed that this is a great idea and he looks forward to getting into the weeds on answering some of the outstanding questions.

Ms. Dorothy stated that she is excited about moving forward with this and is something that has been talked about for a long time. Many people love Worthington and would love to invest in it to sustain the recreation opportunities they have experienced.

Mr. Greeson explained that there are still a lot of details to be ironed out. The staff has discussed making this a first-quarter deep dive rather than supplanting other initiatives before the end of the year. Mr. Hurley brought up that a Parks and Rec commission member suggested a survey to see what people would be excited about with this. There are a few things we can do to put a bow on it, and we can hopefully put some information together to get more Council feedback on.

## 5. Policy Item(s)

### a. Financial Report - September 2021

**Minutes:**

**MOTION:** Mr. Myers moved, seconded by Ms. Dorothy to accept the September 2021 Financial Report as presented.

**The motion carried unanimously by a voice vote.**

## Reports of Council Members

## 6. Reports of Council Members

**Minutes:**

Ms. Kowalczyk shared that starting today the Age-Friendly survey has been released to the public to complete. Age-Friendly Worthington has a steering committee that is working through the process we have agreed to do through the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities, which starts with an assessment of what our community needs in terms of older adults and will support all of us as we grow older. We were fortunate to have this discussion at a time when Age-Friendly Columbus and Franklin County, the Central Ohio Area on Aging, and Franklin County Office on Aging, also have to do an assessment. Instead of us hiring our own consultant to develop a survey, we have been able to piggyback on their work. There are components, first is a representative sample of the community who will get a mailed survey and followed-up with consultants to get a completion of that survey. In addition, there is an opportunity for anyone in the community that is 50 or older to complete the survey online. She noted that Colleen Light is the City representative and has done a tremendous job keeping us on task. There will be a formal notice of this put out to the community soon. We hope to have a report by the end of the year on these results in order to analyze the data. Then we can work towards determining a plan for what we can do in Worthington to progress to becoming Age-Friendly.

Mr. Myers reported that Thursday night there will be a first hearing of the amended application presented by Lifestyle Community's plan for the UMCH property. It will come before the MPC/ARB. He does not believe there will be a vote on the plan, it will be for public input and feedback by the board.

Ms. Dorothy explained that for WIFA, you can sign up to become part of the live Worthington-Sayama garden tour for October 23. There are some book clubs going on and we have had some relationship building with our friends in Japan. The Cemetery Board is moving forward with designs for interior office space at Flint Road Cemetery. One of our CRC members wanted us to acknowledge that we should be celebrating Indigenous People's Day and we might want to consider updating our City calendar to mark this day as Indigenous People's Day.

Mr. Robinson observed that with the upcoming MPC/ARB meeting and the LC presentation, the City staff has recommended a denial of the proposal. He will be watching the meeting with great interest on whether there will be a vote or not, and if so what direction that vote may be.

## Other

### Executive Session

### Adjournment

#### 7. Motion to Adjourn

**Minutes:**

**MOTION:** Mr. Myers moved, Mr. Smith seconded a motion to adjourn.

**The motion carried by a voice vote.**

**President Michael declared the meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.**

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Contact: D. Kay Thress, Clerk of Council (Kay.Thress@worthington.org (614) 436-3100) | Minutes published on 10/27/2021, adopted on 11/01/2021

    /s/ Ethan C. Barnhardt      
Management Assistant

Attest

    /s/ Bonnie D. Michael      
President of Council