



City Council Agenda

Minutes

Monday, October 18, 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 18, 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, Management Assistant Ethan Barnhardt

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes:

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

4. Visitor Comments

Minutes:

There were no visitor comments.

Approval of the Minutes

5. Approval of Minutes - September 13, 2021 and September 20, 2021

Minutes:

MOTION: Mr. Robinson moved, seconded by Ms. Dorothy to accept the minutes of the September 13 and September 20 City Council meetings.

The motion carried unanimously by a voice vote.

New Legislation to Be Introduced

6. Resolution No. 43-2021 Transfer of Previously Appropriated Funds

Adjusting the Annual Budget by Providing for a Transfer of Previously Appropriated Funds.

Minutes:

Introduced by Mr. Myers

MOTION: Mr. Smith moved, seconded by Ms. Kowalczyk to adopt Resolution No. 43-2021

Mr. Greeson explained how several times a year we do what is referred to as transfer resolutions for when there are some funds that need a little bit of money, money can be transferred between accounts in order to ensure there are sufficient funds.

Mr. Robinson asked if there is any financial threshold for when these need to be treated differently. Mr. Bartter replied that the City Manager has authority to move and transfer up to \$1,000 and anything in excess needs to come to Council. We are limited by the amount of appropriated funds that are available. Mr. Greeson explained how this does not result in an increase in the budget, it is just transferring dollars between accounts.

There being no comments, the motion to adopt Resolution No. 43-2021 passed unanimously by a voice vote.

7. Resolution No. 44-2021 Right of Way Renewal (XO)

Approving an Agreement and Permit for and between XO Communications Services, LLC, a Delaware Limited Liability Company, to Operate and Maintain a Telecommunications System Within the City of Worthington Pursuant to and Subject to the Provisions of Chapter 949 of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Worthington.

Minutes:

Introduced by Mr. Bucher

MOTION: Mr. Robinson moved, seconded by Ms. Dorothy to adopt Resolution No. 44-2021

Mr. Greeson stated that this is a standard renewal of XO's permit to be in our right-of-way. They have to periodically seek the renewal of their permit. They have met all requirements of the City's codified ordinances and there is no reason to deny this permit.

There being no comments, the motion to adopt Resolution No. 44-2021 passed unanimously by a voice vote.

8. Ordinance No. 48-2021 General Fund Additional Appropriations

Amending Ordinance No. 44-2020 (As Amended) to Adjust the Annual Budget by Providing for an Appropriation from the General Fund Unappropriated Balance.

Minutes:

Introduced by Ms. Dorothy.

9. Ordinance No. 49-2021 COHCC Joint Self-Insurance Agreement (2022-2024)

Amending, Adopting and Ratifying the Amended and Restated Central Ohio Health Care Consortium Joint Self Insurance Agreement and Approving Participation by the City of Worthington in the Central Ohio Health Care Consortium for the Three-Year Period Beginning January 1, 2022.

Minutes:

Introduced by Mr. Myers

10. Ordinance No. 50-2021 Creating ARPA Fund

Authorizing and Directing the Establishment of a Fund for the Purpose of Receiving Revenue and Accounting for Expenditures of Funds Received from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

Minutes:

Introduced by Mr. Smith

The Clerk was instructed to give notice of a public hearing on said ordinance(s) in accordance with the provisions of the City Charter unless otherwise directed.

Reports of City Officials

11. Policy Item(s)

a. Proposed 2022-2026 Capital Improvements Program

Minutes:

Mr. Greeson detailed how tonight's presentation will overview the City's 2022-2026 Capital Improvements Program. The first year is an action plan for 2022 and the remaining four years are what we project will need to be done for capital investment over the five-year period. The goal will be to talk about the trends in the CIP, cash flow projections, and the financial forecast. We will touch on how it ties into Council's priorities. Staff will also overview debt and uncertainties. The development of this document starts with our conversation in July and we look at the Council's priorities, existing plans that the community has implemented looking at our infrastructure, getting input from advisory boards and commissions, and staff that does condition assessments. We also have concerns expressed from the general public that we log every year and we may not have the budget or resources to address, but we log and program them for subsequent years. At the end of November, we will follow up on any Council questions, followed up by the passage of the ordinances in December.

Ms. Stewart noted how for a number of years we have talked about the CIP being financially constrained, but this year it is not as constrained as in the past. We still cannot do everything we would like to do, but it does contain many of the things we should focus on, including important infrastructure that needs to be maintained. There are a number of new and expanded demands we are trying to address, such as waterline projects that have been accelerated. We also have a number of HVAC needs in City buildings and fire apparatuses that need to be purchased with significant investment. There was also a question several weeks ago about how we might be affected by supply chain issues, which can be seen in the CIP around our equipment purchases that will see price increases that have been adjusted for. The ladder truck and the engine that need to be purchased are seeing increased lead times of up to two years. Though we have more funding available, we also in trying to achieve needed projects, are projecting the use of additional debt over what was planned in the past CIP. We are estimating \$12 million in new debt over a five-year window. Our next larger bond issuance of debt that falls off will be in 2031. We hope to offset

the number of funds the CIP has to transfer for debt payments by the balance of what we have in the general bond retirement fund from property tax revenues and the bond premium we received due to our excellent rating.

Mr. Robinson asked if typically CIP expenditure debt payments are made out of the CIP fund itself. Ms. Stewart explained they are transferred from the Bond Retirement Fund. Mr. Bartter said we pay all of our debt out of the General Bond Retirement Fund. In this five-year window, we are not transferring the full amount of that debt service payment into the General Bond Retirement fund. Since we have built up a balance we can decrease the transfer which frees up some CIP money for other projects. Mr. Robinson clarified that the amount transferring from the CIP has been reduced. Mr. Bartter replied that is correct, it is not the full amount of the debt service payment.

Ms. Stewart noted another trend is the American Recovery Protection Act funds that are coming from the federal government. Those funds are proposed to be used for water line projects, specifically the Parks Overlook waterline, which will reduce debt on a project that would otherwise be debt-funded. She showed a slide that overviews CIP spending projects and equipment minus administrative and debt service costs. The first few years are higher which is not unusual as we have better information and accurate costs earlier in the CIP. It is also driven by significant projects in the first few years. 2022 has multiple sewer projects so we are wrapping up the projects related to our Consent Order with the Ohio EPA. We have an arterial improvement project on Huntley and Schrock, the final phase of McCord Park, and City HVAC work. In 2023 we continue with the Kenyonbrook sewer along with more HVAC and the Park Overlook waterline that also drives up the cost. The high year for equipment in 2023 is primarily due to the purpose of the fire ladder truck.

Ms. Dorothy asked when we would be done with the work required by the Consent Decree for the sewers. Ms. Stewart replied that the projects budgeted for in this CIP should get us through the two major projects we still have outstanding. Ms. Dorothy thanked everyone that has been involved in the long process that is nearing completion, we were putting our sanitary lines into the river and she is so happy that will be remediating that. Ms. Stewart explained that before 2026 we hope to be done. Staff owes Council an update on these projects and will bring that to Council as we move along.

Ms. Stewart overviewed our leveraging of other funds outside of the City's portion of projects and revenue streams. We often are pursuing other funding sources, and are usually 90% or higher for the City's share of these projects. In 2023, we drop and are able to leverage more outside funds, such as using ARPA funds and ODOT funds. We also hope to utilize TIF funds for projects as well. Looking at revenue sources, our primary source is income tax and debt proceeds, she showed slides that show revenue projected out through the CIP. She noted that last year at this time we talked about the ability to increase the MMVLT license tax fees, we might want to look into that at another time, but

since we have a healthier CIP this year we did not project an increase in the MMVLT. For expenditures over the five-year period, we see projects are the biggest category with equipment purchases the next highest, and then debt and administrative payments. The debt service line increases throughout the five-year period due to the fact we anticipate issuing more debt with no notable debt falling off. She overviewed cash flow for expenditures and what things we are cash funding and the trends there. We peak with projects in 2023 due to the Park Overlook waterline. We dip in 2025 after finishing several years of HVAC expenditures for City buildings and we do not yet pick up other expenses until 2026 when we budget for maintenance on the Olentangy Trail.

Mr. Robinson expressed that the debt service nearly doubles from 2022-2026 and he asked about our general debt level and if it is something to be concerned about. Ms. Stewart explained there would be more debt slides later in the presentation.

Ms. Stewart overviewed a slide with graphics showing our expenditures and revenues are lined up through the five-year period. Looking at the fund balance for the CIP fund, we hover around the 50% mark and staff is comfortable with this. We have discussed a 100% fund balance in the past because it helps to cash-flow projects and purchases throughout the year. However, in recent years as our General Fund Balance has increased, we have felt comfortable with a lower level CIP fund balance because the General Fund Balance is very flexible and could be used for temporary cash-flow purposes. She shifted to discussing how this CIP ties to Council priorities. Many items from the Council retreat tie to the Operating Budget, but she can see that future action plans related to the Visioning could tie into the CIP. We went back to the other priorities that Council has discussed including the Wilson Bridge corridor, Age-Friendly initiatives, McCord Park, energy efficiency opportunities, and incentive programs for private buildings in the community. Throughout this proposed CIP, we increased bike and pedestrian allocations from \$100,00 to \$150,000, before increasing again to \$250,000 in the last three years of the CIP. We also have a major Olentangy Trail maintenance project with design work in 2025 and construction in 2026.

When looking at debt on a per capita basis, it makes sense since our revenues are driven by income taxes. Some communities look at debt per assessed valuation, but aside from a small amount of property taxes, we do not pay off debt based on debt per assessed value. Prior to 2000, the City carried very little debt, before taking on debt to convert the current Police building along with expansions at the Community Center. That debt has just fallen off from the City's payment stream, but we have been issuing new debt in recent years and throughout this five-year period. Our debt per capita is increasing over this five-year period.

Mr. Robinson asked how this debt level compares to other comparable communities. Ms. Stewart replied that we do not have comparable numbers this

evening, but staff can look for additional information. We also can look to gather Council questions on debt and schedule a follow-up conversation. In this five-year period, we are managing the payments on that debt. In Worthington, it is not only a picture of how much debt we are carrying versus other communities. It is also what ability we have to repay our debt. We allocate 80% of our income tax revenues to fund operating services, if we could manage to do that with 70% of income tax revenues, shifting more money to the CIP, we could then afford to pay off more debt out of the CIP. So it is not a conversation about how much debt other communities are carrying but, how do they allocate resources to everything that they do, thus how they are able to achieve payments on their debt. As long as we want to maintain a healthy service set, we will be constrained on how much we have available to pay the debt.

Ms. Stewart overviewed the additional debt beyond what we have already issued for projects planned for the CIP. Next, she wanted to discuss 2022 which is the first year of the proposed CIP, which once adopted staff will move forward on implementation and buying that equipment. One of the things she wanted to mention was where these items come from. There have been conversations about how we engage the public and what the interests of the community are. We have a number of ways that are incorporated into our CIP process and highlighted that come to the Council in July to hear thoughts and that meeting is open to the public. We welcome members of the public to share their comments at that meeting. We also rely heavily on our adopted plans and studies, which have had their own extensive community engagement and dialogue around them. Boards and commissions are an additional conduit that we look to for suggestions and they are interacting with the community to bring ideas forward. We are also assessing our existing infrastructure and bringing in experts to address what needs to be done. For the area of the legal mandate, most are driven by our sanitary sewers. Our essentials for basic services, most of these are driven by assessments from City staff or consulting expertise as we are looking at infrastructure conditions. Those assessments then drive which projects are suggested for the proposed CIP. On the improvements for basic service projects, many come from the Parks Master Plan and staff evaluation of current conditions. Probably 3/4 of the list is from the Parks Master Plan. Enhancement and discretionary projects come from the Bike and Ped Master Plan and the Wayfinding Plan. These are continued investments in recommendations from those plans. The streetscape improvements are often tied to our enhancement strategies and plans for the community. Some notable equipment purchases include our accounting and payroll software that is at the end of life in terms of support. Council has also received reports from our IT Director, and we have been investing in our server and network given the cyber environment of today's world. In Fire and EMS in 2022, we have the replacement of a medic vehicle planned. In Parks and Recreations, we use mowers a lot and put a lot of hours on them, so they pop up in our replacement schedule

regularly. Our Community Center is such a high-use asset, we make a priority in investing in that building for the public. There are smaller investments at Planning and Building for furniture and equipment replacement. In Police, we have regular investments in maintaining their equipment. Service and Engineering have routine items also, none of which are high dollar. When it comes to uncertainties, mostly we focused on the income tax collections, which was touched on last week. It is a question of whether the current net profit taxes can be sustained and how will work from home will impact our tax collections and really only time will tell.

After the proposed CIP was prepared, we received a funding request from the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board for \$200,000 annually to fill in sidewalk gaps. This is not addressed in the proposed CIP since the document was already written, but since the staff has brainstormed some potential options to respond to the request for funding. One option is to consider allocating some or all of the increase already included to go towards sidewalk gaps. Another option is to allocate the existing annual funding and then consider other projects on an individual basis. We could also reduce or delete funding for something else and shift that to sidewalk gaps. One option would be to transfer money from the General Fund to the CIP for the sidewalks. A pilot program could be conducted to gauge the successes and challenges, and then figure out an ongoing strategy. Often times sidewalks seem easy, but they rarely are. Even individual gaps can be challenging to accomplish.

President Michael wondered how many years the \$200,00 a year ask is for to get the gaps filled. At some point in time, we should be able to get the gaps filled and it should not be in perpetuity. Mr. Hurley explained that the discussion around the recommendation was based on a rough estimate from the Engineering department, which would take about 5-years at \$200,000 to fill the gaps. They know that this is an aggressive ask, but the goal would be for Council to support the policy and fund it as feasible. Mr. Whalen explained that the goal is to provide funding since the current ordinance provides for 50% to be paid by the homeowner and 50% by the City. That ordinance has been ineffective in handling sidewalk gaps in the community. They would like to see an increased allocation to accomplish this goal. Otherwise, there are a lot of other priorities. The Master Plan has a prioritized list of sidewalk gaps with some estimates, and they have received several citizen improvement requests. They would not want to see this be taken out of their regularly allocated budget. They would be open to learning about a more appropriate amount if that is too aggressive.

Mr. Robinson asked about the timing and process for deciding this issue. He wondered how much time there is to consider this issue. Ms. Stewart responded that if you want it to be reflected in the CIP, we would usually workshop this tonight and then move on to Operating Budget workshops, then in the third meeting in November, we would revisit the CIP. Typically the CIP is adopted at the first meeting in December. That would be ideal to address 2022 in the CIP,

but if you want to look longer term, then you can work on that over the next year for the updates to next year's CIP. Mr. Robinson explained that he would like to look at the Sidewalk Plan again, and then he asked if the increased funds to bike and pedestrian were already allocated to specific projects. Ms. Stewart replied that it is an increase to their general allocation and they prioritize how they want to spend the funds, which comes back to Council. In this proposed CIP their allocation increased to \$150,00 in the first two years and \$250,00 in the last three years. Mr. Greeson explained that it is possible when the design process is completed and scoped, we might move away from an annual allocation and more of a specific project each year, but we are not there yet until the design evaluation is complete. Mr. Robinson asked for the Sidewalk Plan to be forwarded.

Mr. Myers explained how we know with sidewalks, money is the least significant thing about sidewalks. Not everyone wants sidewalks. Building more sidewalks inefficiently is not a good use of money and we need to look at where sidewalks go and what they look like. Whenever a new development is done, part of the application process through MPC is that you have to add sidewalks, which is why we have a lot of sidewalks to nowhere. So we have already ingrained that into our thinking, and he would rather see a plan as to where the best place to be the sidewalks where it is most beneficial and effective.

Ms. Kowalczyk asked if there are ADA implications for these sidewalk gap projects and ones that we should be doing. Mr. Hurley said that the Bike and Ped Advisory Board has had an influx, particularly with COVID, and a lot more people out and walking. We have a lot of very specific sidewalk gaps that want sidewalks. It took us back to an exercise going back to the master plan process identifying those types of sidewalk gaps. These are specific sidewalk gaps. The Board would like to have a placeholder of money and Council's acknowledgment of moving forward. They would work on the prioritization and make recommendations on which gaps and in what order.

Mr. Myers explained that he realizes sidewalks are capital expenditure but asked if that has to be. Mr. Greeson responded no, you could pay from the general fund. Mr. Myers expressed it might make sense when we are doing curb and gutter work, if it is a good location we could expense them and do it at once. Mr. Hurley explained that even then there still may be residents who do not want those gaps filled, so there needs to be a policy prioritizing those that are beneficial to the community at large. Even as recent as the Master Plan process we did not get a lot of push on the sidewalks, it has just been in the past few years between visioning and COVID, we are hearing it more now. Mr. Greeson explained that we can technically pay from the General Fund, it is our most flexible pool of dollars. Generally, for anything that is a capital item we are planning for, we put it in the CIP, and this makes sense to do it that way on an annual basis. The policy issue is the biggest piece, we have previously said if sidewalk gaps are to be filled, residents need to be specially assessed, or follow

a procedure in the code where property owners have to petition the City and pay for half the design and construction costs. Through those mechanisms, limited numbers of people have taken advantage of these options. The question is if Council wants to have the City pay for, not the resident, the filling of gaps proactively and have the Bike and Ped Advisory Board help craft a policy that accomplishes that and bring forward priorities each year and do we want to shift from our current strategy to one that incrementally over time fills the gaps. Mr. Myers said he is a little gun shy on sidewalks, in the past, he has heard people very emotional over sidewalks. He is reluctant to set aside money until he knows what the process is. The current process was difficult to create. Bike and Ped could possibly work on an alternative approach to be funded with City dollars at 100%. We could start with potentially non-controversial sidewalks. Ms. Kowlaczyk agreed and that this is an important issue, there needs to be a way to explore the process in a way that is fair. Many of the objections she has heard have been around having to assume the cost. There is at least one city in Central Ohio that has assumed the full cost. There are other alternatives for proposing waivers for people who cannot afford to implement sidewalks. We should really be focused on this issue more and tackle it. One of the visioning statements is that Worthington is connected and this literally connects Worthington.

Mr. Bucher expressed support for further exploration. He would like to see a policy fleshed out a little more and then possibly insert funds for the next fiscal year. Mr. Greeson replied that could be done, or program some funds for 2022 as a pilot until the policy is explored further.

Mr. Myers asked if that Bike and Ped would be willing to undertake to work on a policy, it is going to be a challenge to come up with a process and it will take some staff time. Pretty much everyone has the same type of ordinance for assessment and petition. This is a big ask. Mr. Whalen replied that the Master Plan does have a priority list of existing gaps. Mr. Myers expressed there then needs to be a way to obtain public comment and the process to come to Council for funding. Mr. Whalen expressed that it does sound like a little more responsibility than they would be willing to take on, the Master Plan process did include community involvement conducted by professional consultants. From an advisory board standpoint, they can help with prioritization. Mr. Myers asserted he wants to hear what the process looks like to identify the best candidates and what they look like.

Mr. Smith added that there may be a soft to hard commitment on finances, we just need to figure out the policy.

Mr. Robinson asked if the development of the list of priority projects include direct discussions with homeowners to assess resistance, or was it an objective assessment about what would be most beneficial. Mr. Whalen replied it was an objective assessment and they have not had contact with homeowners at this point.

Ms. Dorothy shared she appreciates this being brought forth. We want top-down, bottom-up, and this is bottom up asking for an additional allocation. Changing the built environment takes money. Looking at visioning, Age-Friendly, and the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan, we have these sidewalk gaps hindering walkability. She would love for the Bike and Ped committee to come back with a pilot program that could be implemented on a prior basis in addition to their current funding.

Ms. Stewart clarified that Council is not requesting additional allocations to the CIP related to the sidewalk requests, recognizing it will be revisited. She summarized in closing, tying into the proposed operating budget, in the Service and Engineering budget there is additional funding for project management. We have been ramping up the number of projects and we are finding it is a challenge for staff to manage the projects, so there will be some funding in the operating budget through the use of consultants.

Mr. Bucher asked with the ARPA dollars for Park Overlook in 2023, whether that is based on when we get access to the funds or based on workload. Ms. Stewart replied that we have design funding in 2022 and construction in 2023, it takes some time to execute the design before going out to bid. Mr. Greeson stated we received half of the ARPA funds and will get more next summer.

Ms. Kowalczyk expressed she is happy to see the number of waterlines slated for improvement. She asked if, in the CIP, the waterline identified are the only waterlines that need to be improved or are there more. In terms of sequencing is it advisable to do one after another, or can we frontload and do more work on waterlines sooner rather than later. She knows it is a high priority for folks in Colonial Hills who are experiencing a number of waterline breaks. Ms. Stewart replied that it is based on the waterline study, they are broken up into individual projects on what makes sense to do as a project and what areas to group into a project. When you start grouping them together, one can really disrupt a neighborhood to do the waterlines at once and requires funding. Financially, we could do one massive project but then you would need to be able to manage it, working with neighbors and tearing up streets at the same time. Ms. Kowalczyk asked if there are more waterlines we can tackle. Ms. Stewart replied there is a number we can work on as we have the time and resources to do those, so these are the highest priority projects.

Mr. Myers brought up how when you walk into City Hall, the Griswold, or the Recreation Center, you see a plaque with everyone's names on it. We do not have a plaque with our names on it. Other than a handful of projects, we do not really have any big additive programs, everything is taking care of what we have. Hopefully, we will have some ability to start thinking about the next big additive thing for Worthington with the exception of some nice roads and better park over the past 20 years.

Reports of Council Members

12. Reports of Council Members

Minutes:

Ms. Dorothy explained how she attended MORPC's Summit on Sustainability downtown. One session was about LinkUS, COTA, and Bus Rapid Transit. This is in conjunction with Columbus looking to adjust the zoning code for greater density and people not having to use cars. Cars are one of the big drivers of carbon usage in the United States. If we want to reduce carbon, we should look at updating our zoning and working more with COTA. We have had some misses with getting more COTA stops in Worthington in the past. That is something the entire region is looking at and we should be aware of. She also attended a session on inequalities in transportation and the proximity of employment centers and where employees live. That has everything to do with zoning. Another session was building active transportation for all of our neighbors, where ODOT has a lot more funding for all modes of transportation. Franklin County is emphasizing different modes of transportation.

Mr. Myers brought up that last Thursday, the MPC/ARB sent a recommendation to Council to deny the application of Lifestyle Communities. We do not know if that will be brought to Council or if they will withdraw and resubmit a new application when the time is appropriate.

Mr. Bucher urged the community to vote and to vote early if possible or in-person on November 2nd.

Other

Executive Session

13. Executive Session

Minutes:

MOTION: Mr. Bucher moved, seconded by Ms. Kowalczyk to enter Executive Session for the purposes of discussing economic development discussions and board and commission appointments.

The clerk called the roll on Executive Session.

The motion carried by a roll call vote.

Council recessed at 9:03 p.m. from the Regular meeting session.

MOTION: Mr. Smith moved, Mr. Myers seconded a motion to return to open session at 9:34 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously by a roll call vote.

Adjournment

14. Motion to Adjourn

Minutes:

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

The motion carried by a voice vote.

President Michael declared the meeting adjourned at 9:34 p.m.

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