



City Council Agenda

Minutes

Monday, January 10, 2022 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, January 10, 2022. President Robinson called the meeting to order at or about 7:30 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Minutes:

Members Present: Katherine Brewer, Peter Bucher, Beth Kowalczyk, Rebecca Hermann, Bonnie Michael, Doug Smith, and David Robinson

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 Planning & Building Lee Brown, Director of Parks & Recreation Darren Hurley, Chief of Police Robert Ware, Chief of Fire & EMS Mark Zambito, Management Assistant Ethan Barnhardt

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes:

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

Special Presentation(s)

4. COVID-19 Report

Minutes:

Mr. Greeson explained how Worthington's public health department is contracted through Columbus Public Health and they have been our partners in battling the pandemic. At times, it has been important to receive updates from them at a Council meeting to help with decision-making at pivotal times in the life of the pandemic. The Policy Director from Columbus Public Health, Edward Johnson, will be providing an update tonight.

Mr. Johnson shared that we are just a few cases short of 247,000 in the entirety of

Franklin County, for the City of Worthington the total case count is 2,255. Since the onset of the Omicron Variant, cases rates in Worthington have risen in accordance with Franklin County and the City of Columbus. Before the turn of the new year, CPH did see its all-time record of cases, just short of 2,300 total cases. Of that number, 41 were cases in the City of Worthington, matching the record for overnight cases. Transmission remains very high, including in Franklin County, with 1,600 cases per 100,000 and the CDC definition for high transmission is 100 cases per 100,000. Omicron has a very high replicative rate, higher than both the Delta variant and the original COVID strain. The hospital systems shared that of all the hospitalized COVID patients, between 80-90% were unvaccinated individuals. Vaccination is one of the best tools we can use to fight this pandemic. In Worthington, the completed vaccination course stands at 73.9% and is above the Franklin County number for vaccination.

Ms. Michael expressed her concerns over being able to get testing kits, she has had constituents share how tests are always out and they have not been able to get tests. Mr. Johnson replied that they are waiting on their allocation from the state, and with the demand for test kits, supply has been short. They have heard that by mid to late January, CPH will receive their next shipment of at-home tests, but in the meantime, folks should limit their activities outside of the home. If you are sick or exhibiting symptoms, call CPH to arrange testing for a PCR nasal swab to confirm whether someone has COVID-19.

Mr. Smith asked about how the increase in cases has translated to hospitalization numbers and death, particularly in Franklin County, and how it compares to last year. Mr. Johnson said that hospitalization is similar along with the pressures on the hospitals. Bed capacity is also contingent on staffing levels in hospitals. Last year there may have been more available staff for beds, but this year there are not as many beds available due to fewer nurses and doctors. The severity of symptoms with Omicron is not as grave, but we still have seen pressures on the hospital system. With case fatalities, there has been a steady and consistent trend with those because we are finding better ways to treat and provide supportive care for individuals with COVID.

Ms. Kowalczyk asked about the importance of boosters in minimizing symptoms. She wondered how we are doing with boosters and why that is so important. Mr. Johnson expressed that boosters are extremely important and that most of the folks in the hospital are those that are unboosted. We know that vaccines are effective at preventing death and severe illness. Until the FDA changes its definition for fully vaccinated, which is only the first dose for the J&J vaccine, or the two doses of Pfizer and Moderna, we will continue to count fully vaccinated in that way. People are happy to get their boosters, and we need folks to continue to do so. CPH will be back at the Celeste Center next week for a 2-day community vaccination clinic.

Ms. Hermann expressed how when we first entered the pandemic, it was explained that COVID was not affecting children. Now we are seeing and hearing that this has now changed, and Nationwide Children's Hospital is now beginning to see more

children. She asked about that and how we can help with that. Mr. Johnson replied that at the beginning of the pandemic, children were not as highly affected. However, the mutated variants have been able to find children and make them sick with COVID-19 now. We encourage folks in school settings, to get children vaccinated. They had the opportunity to be in Thomas Worthington High School and Perry Middle School to conduct vaccination clinics for the community and they were pleased with the turnout for pediatric doses administered. Children in schools tend to do well and there is not a great amount of transmission in the schoolhouse setting. However, it is easy to let our guard down outside of the school, and that is where many children contract COVID-19.

Ms. Brewer asked about when it is the right time and what are the standards for when mask mandates should be in place and removed. Mr. Johnson replied that the guidance that CPH is using for municipalities with mandates in place, that they would like to see four consecutive weeks at the moderate standard as defined by the CDC, based on case rates per 100,000 and positivity rates over a seven-day rolling period.

Ms. Kowalczyk explained how there have been some updated recommendations on the effectiveness of different types of masks. Mr. Johnson explained that if there is availability or accessibility for a KN-95, they are a higher quality mask that offers a greater level of protection. We know that cloth masks were a stopgap measure at the start of the pandemic when the availability of surgical and other masks was not available. If possible, when using a cloth mask you should double mask.

President Robinson asked about the commonplace masks that are often blue or black and where they fall in the spectrum of effectiveness. Mr. Johnson replied that a surgical mask falls in between that KN-95 and the cloth mask, it is usable and is perfectly fine if it is available.

Mr. Bucher asked if there are any other policy solutions that other municipalities have utilized that we might consider or if the mask requirement is the most effective one we can do citywide to reduce community spread. Mr. Johnson explained that masking is a must as we deal with the Omicron Variant. Large venues may or may not implement vaccine or test requirements to make sure that events are no super spreaders. There is a balance between protecting the most people, but also allowing the community and businesses to operate.

President Robinson explained how over the weekend, he attempted and succeeded in getting an appointment for his stepmother to get a booster. He found the process online to be surprisingly confusing and difficult. He wondered if there were any other options aside from the pop-up clinics that the average person may do and what are the most fluid and easy-to-navigate websites. Mr. Johnson shared that at CPH's main site on Parsons Avenue, they do have a clinic that offers vaccines with no appointment necessary. The Federal Government has Vaccines.gov which can show availability, and the state has a website as well. If you have My Chart, you can set vaccine appointments with Ohio State or Ohio Health. President Robinson asked if there was any speculation or forecasting for how the Omicron Variant may play out. Mr. Johnson explained that CPH is working based on what their partners in Cleveland

have seen as they were the first to have Omicron and be hit by it. It is believed they are currently on their peak and coming off it in late January or early February. Their modeling shows a peak in Columbus in mid-January and coming off in early to mid-February.

Reports of City Officials

5. Discussion Item(s)

a. Community Grant Process

Minutes:

Mr. Robinson summarized how the objective tonight is for Council to review the Community Grant Process and to either suggest changes or approve it as presented, and to discuss the Council representatives to the committee.

Mr. Greeson explained how Council budgeted and appropriated about \$37,500 for 2022 to grant funds to community organizations. Before doing that, the staff wants to confirm with Council the process and priorities for those dollars.

Ms. Stewart detailed how this grant program is for the smaller grants that we give to non-profits for anywhere from a few hundred dollars to five or six thousand dollars. The application materials are made available in the first quarter of the year to apply for the funds. There are three different items she wanted to check with the Council regarding this, including the overall priorities of Council for what should be funded from the program, secondly, there is a matrix the review committee uses to evaluate application requests, and third is the grant review committee and whether there should be any changes made. Regarding the priorities, the past few years they have been to meet basic human necessities such as the provision of food or clothing and mental health services, a secondary priority has been a general improvement to the Worthington community.

Ms. Michael expressed that they have worked well in the past and are the type of priorities that really do not go away.

President Robinson asked for additional discussion and mentioned that Mr. Smith and Ms. Kowalczyk have spearheaded the grant review committee in the past and whether they had any comments.

Ms. Kowalczyk agreed with Ms. Michael that it has been a good process and she has appreciated the opportunity to learn about the group serving our community. She believes the priorities are on point and the process works well. She has served on this committee for four years and is willing to step aside if someone else would like the chance to serve and learn more about these groups and how this process works.

Mr. Smith agreed with Ms. Kowalczyk, and that the matrix provides enough flexibility for the folks in the room to collectively come to a consensus to help people out.

Mr. Bucher volunteered to help serve as a volunteer on the review committee.

President Robinson asked if there is a limitation on how many people can serve on this committee. Ms. Stewart explained that this committee has been something created by Council to give advice on this and is not rooted in our codified ordinances or any official structure of the City. It is Council's prerogative on who serves. Historically, there have been two Councilmembers, a representative of the Worthington Schools, a Griswold Center representative, and someone representing the Community Relations Commission.

Ms. Kowalczyk expressed she is fine allowing someone else the opportunity to serve, so if Mr. Bucher would like to do so, he is welcome.

President Robinson expressed that Mr. Bucher and Mr. Smith will move forward as representatives to the committee.

Mr. Greeson brought up that it may be advantageous to have a motion to adopt the program guidelines.

Ms. Stewart asked for clarification on whether the Council is okay with the format of the matrix.

Ms. Brewer asked how many community groups are typically not approved and if there is a way to reach a greater amount of non-profit groups. Ms. Stewart explained that many are not granted what they are asked for, the committee likes to partially fund just about everyone unless there is a group that does not fully fit in with the program. Groups that get a smaller percentage of their ask, tend to be in the more general improvement to the Worthington community.

MOTION: Ms. Kowalczyk moved, seconded by Mr. Bucher to approve the established community grant process including the matrix, the inclusion of Councilmembers Bucher and Smith as the Councilmembers, and the priorities outlined.

The motion carried unanimously by a voice vote

6. Policy Item(s)

a. Financial Report - December 2021

Minutes:

Mr. Bartter shared that in December 2021, the City paid off the 2001 issuance for the expansion of the Community Center and the Police Building. That does not occur often and is worthy of being mentioned on the record. Secondly, when looking at the financial report, you will see the fund balance is 65% of prior year expenditures which is greater than the 50% needed to have a discussion with the Council which will be scheduled for the second meeting in February. Finally, he forewarned that the fund balance will drop in January with the unencumbered balance dropping because budgets get encumbered for the year.

President Robinson asked for a little bit of a forecast of his presentation about the fund balance in February in terms of the outlook for 2022. Mr. Bartter expressed it will be important to discuss work from home and refunds. President Robinson noticed that the income tax collections for the year were 16% above both projected and 2020. Mr. Bartter explained that income tax collections in

2021 were projected to be flat. Mr. Greeson explained how in February, we issue an annual financial report that is a fairly robust document with long-term trend information and is the best time to discuss because it can be related back to a long-term fiscal perspective.

MOTION: Mr. Smith moved, seconded by Mr. Bucher to accept the December 2021 Financial Report.

The motion carried unanimously by a voice vote

Reports of Council Members

7. Reports of Council Members

Minutes:

Mr. Bucher brought up an idea to see if there is broader support in 2022, in the spirit of the community groups, compiling a group of community groups to possibly come in over the coming months to discuss their projects, priorities, and what Council may need to know. That way we are hopefully proactively reaching out to groups that may not come before Council regularly. He would like to bring this idea up at a future discussion to be proactive in our community engagement.

Ms. Kowalczyk shared that on the various boards she has been a part of, there have been transitions in leadership and as those transitions occur, we honor those that transition out of leadership. Unfortunately, we did not do that last week, so she would like to express her gratitude to Bonnie Michael for her many years of service to this community. She has given significant time and commitment to our City and has been a dedicated public servant, and made history as the first woman to serve as President of the Worthington City Council. She wanted to make sure that Ms. Michael's service is appreciated. She additionally brought up that a new, exciting exhibition is opening at the McConnell Arts Center next week called "Post No Ills" that features new work by Columbus Artist Lance Johnson. It is a multidisciplinary exhibition around urban art, placed in a suburban setting. The MAC is collaborating with the City's MLK Day event and is exploring other ways to connect with diversity initiatives across the City. She is also involved with the Worthington Racial Justice Organizing group, they are working on a framework for racial equity in communities. They convened a group with invited community stakeholders to participate in an initial discussion on whether this is an appropriate framework to discuss racial justice issues in our community. There will be a fuller report later on the Age-Friendly Communities Initiative, which is engaging in data collection with preliminary survey results and focus groups.

Ms. Michael shared that the Central Ohio Mayors/Managers Association had the US Sixth Circuit Court decision on tree protection fees and the impact on cities. The bottom line is that attorney groups are working to figure out how ordinances can be written or rewritten. There needs to be a clearly stated economic impact of the tree being cut down. She mentioned there is information about the Voinovich School of Leadership Program at Councilmembers places, and how it is a wonderful opportunity to learn.

Ms. Brewer mentioned how she met the head of the Franklin County ADAM-H, and how she is interested in talking with the Council on how we could improve public safety responses for mental health. She will be talking with her via Zoom in a couple of weeks and welcome other Councilmembers to participate.

Other

Executive Session

Appointment of Public Officials

To consider the appointment of public officials, pursuant to 109.10(a) of the Worthington Codified Ordinances.

8. Executive Session

Minutes:

MOTION: Ms. Hermann moved, Mr. Smith seconded a motion to go into Executive Session to consider the appointment of public officials pursuant to 109.10 of the Worthington Codified Ordinances.

The clerk called the roll on Executive Session with the motion carrying unanimously.

Council recessed at 8:23 p.m. from the Regular meeting session.

Council adjourned from executive session at 8:58 p.m.

Adjournment

9. Motion to Adjourn

Minutes:

MOTION: Mr. Bucher moved, Ms. Brewer seconded a motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously by a voice vote.

President Robinson declared the meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

Contact: D. Kay Thress, Clerk of Council (Kay.Thress@worthington.org (614) 436-3100) | Minutes published on 03/03/2022, adopted on 03/07/2022

/s/ Ethan C. Barnhardt
Management Assistant

Attest

/s/ David Robinson
President of Council