

MANAGER’S CONFERENCE MINUTES
Portsmouth City Council Meeting on
February 8, 2021 – 6:59 p.m.

Members present:

Sean Dunne	1 st Ward
Charlotte Gordon	2 nd Ward
Kevin E. Johnson	3 rd Ward
Lyvette Mosley	4 th Ward
Edwin Martell	5 th Ward
Dennis Packard	6 th Ward

Also present was City Manager Sam Sutherland, City Clerk Diana Ratliff, Solicitor John Haas and Auditor M. Trent Williams.

1. **Commission Limit on Food Delivery Companies** **CM-21-05**

Manager Sutherland requested that legislation be moved forward and asked for a copy of what the other cities ordinances look like so that we would have something to reference.

Vice President Dunne motioned to adopt alternative #1.

There were no questions or comments: **VOTE: 6 Ayes – 0 Nays**

2. **Appropriation of Funds for Dump Truck** **CM-21-06**

Manager Sutherland reminded Council that the city had bought a large excavator and trailer to be able to assist with raising condemned properties and to be able to do larger water and sewer line projects. They were looking for a used dump truck and have found out that they’re not easy to come by and he would like the appropriation to be available so that when one was found, they would be able to move fast on it. Mayor Johnson asked if the city had torn down any houses yet, Manager Sutherland replied, not yet but they did the water line on McKinley Avenue in 1 ½ weeks and they would not have been able to do that with the old equipment. Mayor Johnson stated that the request was for \$30,000 and Manager Sutherland stated that it would be about \$50,000; \$10,000 from the General Fund, \$20,000 from Water and \$20,000 from Sewer.

Vice President Dunne motioned to adopt alternative #1.

There were no questions or comments: **VOTE: 6 Ayes – 0 Nays**

3. **Emergency appropriation for Pump Repair** **CM-21-07**

Manager Sutherland stated that one out of the three pumps had failed and they’re left with two and if one of them fail it would be better to be safe than sorry. Councilwoman Gordon stated that it had been about one year since the presentation regarding the new water plant and wanted to know if there was a comprehensive plan to fix it or was it being fixed as something breaks. Mr. Sutherland said that this particular item had to be fixed and as far as the new water treatment plant, they were looking at a new intake structure that would have new pumps, new everything but it would cost around \$8-\$9 million. She asked if this would just repair what’s broken or could it be replaced with something that could be used at the new plant. Mr. Sutherland stated that when the city moves to the new system, it would be an entirely new setup. He said that this was down in the raw water pumping station and he would be glad to take them for a tour. He added that it was about 15ft below the river and the new design would be for the pump to be below the water level but the motor and everything else would be on an upper floor. He said in reality, the city should have built a new water plant 20 years ago but the funds weren’t there and it had been pushed passed its useful life by about 30 years. He said that he’s hoping that some grant money would be received, possibly EPA loan money available at low or no interest loan and Governor DeWine had proposed approximately \$250,000,000 for infrastructure repair and the city will pursue every avenue possible but the total amount to build would be \$40 million.

Vice President Dunne motioned to adopt alternative #1.

There were no questions or comments: **VOTE: 6 Ayes – 0 Nays**

4. **Salary Increase for Community Development Director**

CM-21-08

Manager Sutherland stated that Council had received an email from the Community Development Director to justify what was being requested as a raise. In her mind and what she had researched, the Human Rights Commission would increase her job duties significantly. Mayor Johnson stated that in the past 3-4 years he'd done the appointments on the Fair Housing Board and to his knowledge, they've never had a meeting so there wasn't a whole lot of work there but understood that this would be intertwined with the Human Rights Commission and they've yet to have a meeting. He wasn't really in favor of giving a raise based on something that might happen. Vice President Dunne stated that with the Human Rights Commission there would be the possibility of more work because it would be an added area of responsibility. He said that if a complaint was received on the non-discrimination, the Human Rights Commission would review it and part of that would be trying to get a mediation rather than fines. He said as far as salary reviews, he actually thought the argument would be more on what the city had recently accomplished regarding grants and advancing in the downtown which had come from Community Development, such as the Dog Park Grant, Funding for the Skate Park and working on other related grants for the parks and that department had quite the successful track record. Mayor Johnson stated that this department received a raise when the other departments had received raises and he didn't see at this time where this would warrant a raise. Councilwoman Gordon asked Manager Sutherland if Director Shearer had incurred a lot of extra hours and work through the whole COVID pandemic as she managed a lot of the COVID money and dispersals. Manager Sutherland replied that she had worked very hard and she felt that she was being given new duties added to her with the Human Rights Commission and he wasn't sure what would happen in the future with the Commission but from what he had read, there was more to it than just chairing a meeting and she would have to handle issues as they start popping up and with today's climate, he believed that would happen. Mayor Johnson stated that recently they had discussed raises and talked about looking at a few employees each year because there had already been a few raises this year and he would very much entertain that thought process but this was a job that hadn't even started yet and would like to see this tabled or take no action until we see if it does cause a lot more work. Mr. Dunne suggested that we take no action and request additional information and talk about it later. Councilman Packard stated that the request was made on the belief that additional work and resources would be needed and once Council sees that, they could address it at that point. Ideally, we don't want to have to deal with hate and discrimination and the things that her letter proposed. Councilman Martell stated that the committee was a volunteer committee, but that was for citizens and Council had asked her to add more duties to her job whether its small or large, Council had asked her to do more work and she shouldn't volunteer her time to be over the committee. He added that if it hadn't been for Ms. Shearer, the Master Plan would not have gotten done, the drawings for the riverfront, dog park, skate park, Mound Park and all of the different projects that she's been in charge of and Councilwoman Mosley agreed with Mr. Martell. Ms. Gordon added that she had also applied and received a school grant and "yes" it was her job and you fund the position and not the person but if this position was growing, Council should look at it from that perspective. Manager Sutherland stated that he anticipated that this would be an active committee and it appeared that it would entail more than the Fair Housing.

Vice President Dunne motioned to adopt alternative #3, take no action.

There were no questions or comments: **VOTE: 6 Ayes – 0 Nays**

5. **Advance Payment of Taxes**

CM-21-09

Auditor Williams stated that this was the annual request for the County Auditor to send us an advance on the property taxes that we would receive later in the year.

Vice President Dunne motioned to adopt alternative #1.

There were no questions or comments: **VOTE: 6 Ayes – 0 Nays**

Discussion –

Grant Process for Community Agency Funding – Councilwoman Gordon said that she would like to set a meeting with Manager Sutherland and Tracy Shearer.

Cleanup Program with Utilization Students – Councilman Martell was still waiting on additional information.

Renewable Energy – Councilman Dunne stated that the process involved putting a referendum question on the General Election ballot and that question would ask people if they would like to move forward with essentially pulling together the buying power of the residents of Portsmouth to obtain more wholesale pricing on the electricity that they use as well as getting cleaner energy options. This was a program that they've seen throughout the state such as Chillicothe and Athens both have opted into the program. He said that if it was voted for in November, then Council would need to move forward with legislation. He said that if you're a resident of Portsmouth, you could opt-out, he personally liked this as an idea for the city for one because there's likely to be higher utility cost because of all of the craziness at the State level with the nuclear power. One of the things we could do, would be to bring down cost for Portsmouth residents and to also seek out greener alternatives. Councilman Packard asked VP Dunne about the carbon emission tax/penalty and that a lot of residents were unsure about it and the facts on that particular language wasn't what a lot of people realize and asked him to explain that more in detail. Mr. Dunne stated that he would review it and explain it more in detail at the next meeting. Mr. Martell asked if this information should go out to the media, Mr. Dunne stated that they had done some educational programs in other cities and they want people to know what they're voting on. Clerk Ratliff stated that the media had been provided the information, as she had attached it with the City Manager's agenda to the media. Council decided to move this forward onto the City Manager's agenda.

Councilwoman Gordon stated that she had been hearing a lot about rural broadband in Ohio, Mr. Sutherland stated that this area was definitely part of that conversation. He said that the MARKS radio towers were basically off-limits because of the way they were financed and the State figured out a way to refinance the MARKS towers so now they could allow the broadband companies to lease from the State and attach to the current towers to provide rural WIFI. He said Scioto and Jackson County were one of the trial spots to see how it goes and if it worked, he was sure that they would move it around the state.

Councilwoman Gordon asked Solicitor Haas about the opioid settlement nationally and would our city see any of that money, he replied that he only knew what had been printed in the newspaper. He said the firm that the city hired was still working on it and a bunch of the companies that were sued had filed bankruptcy and they're working their way through those issues. There had not been many updates for a while.

The meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m. on a motion by Vice President Dunne.

Submitted by: *Diana Ratliff* – City Clerk