

**MANAGER’S CONFERENCE MINUTES**  
**Portsmouth City Council Meeting on**  
**July 22, 2019 – 7:09 p.m.**

Members present:

Sean Dunne	1 <sup>st</sup> Ward
Vacant	2 <sup>nd</sup> Ward
Kevin E. Johnson	3 <sup>rd</sup> Ward
Jerrold Albrecht	4 <sup>th</sup> Ward
Gene Meadows	5 <sup>th</sup> Ward
Thomas K. Lowe	6 <sup>th</sup> Ward

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

1. **Re-establishment of Positions**

**CM-19-54**

Manager Sutherland stated that he had been evaluating the different departments within the city and had come to the conclusion that there were two spots that needed immediate attention. The first one was in the Traffic Division which was down to two people and that it had been hard to get curbs painted and streets striped as well as cutting grass at the camp ground. The second was the Cemetery Division, they were cutting 40 acres of grass with only two people and if someone goes on vacation or off sick, there were issues. He looked at the budget and the requested \$65,000 would get them through the end of the year and then he would reassess during the 2020 budget process. Councilman Lowe asked if they were to be full time positions and Manager Sutherland replied “yes”. Acting Mayor Johnson asked if the cemetery had seasonal help and what months does the city utilize their services; Manager Sutherland replied that they do have seasonal workers that only work 500 hours and they try to work them in April and May but grass cutting can go further into the summer months. Mr. Johnson asked if this would eliminate the seasonal workers if another employee is added and Mr. Sutherland said that he didn’t want to eliminate the seasonal workers from the cemetery because it’s 40 acres of grass and when there are raining seasons such as we had this past spring, it was a nightmare to keep up and he’s proud of what they accomplished this summer because it looked really nice. Mr. Johnson also asked if the cemetery was still using the chemical product “roundup” and Mr. Sutherland replied that it was used around the outer fence and along the paved areas but not on the grave stones. Mr. Johnson asked about the Traffic Division and the position of heavy equipment operator and what kind of equipment it would entail. Mr. Sutherland responded that a heavy equipment operator is a description and title of different positions in one. They have added additional seasonal workers to the Traffic department but it still was not enough, because the curbs weren’t getting painted, the streets were not striped and this particular department has taken on the task of keeping the grass cut at the camp ground to help other departments. Councilman Dunne asked if the Traffic Division would be part of the machinery be for the road striping. Mr. Sutherland stated that the city already has the equipment but there haven’t been enough men to run the equipment because it took 3 men to run the striping machine. Councilman Albrecht stated that he had noticed that Offnere Street had been striped and Mr. Sutherland replied that the budget had provided for some Thermoplastic striping which was done on Offnere Street and wasn’t done immediately because the city contracts that work and that particular job cost \$17,000. It was expensive but lasts a lot longer than the striping that the city currently provides.

Councilman Albrecht moved to adopt alternative #1.

Councilman Lowe stated that he understood the need for additional people in the summer time and he asked if the additional person would be available to work in other department during the winter months. Mr. Sutherland stated that there was more than enough work to keep these divisions busy because at one time they had 4 people. Solicitor Haas wasn’t sure how the Union contract read and asked about the winter months in the cemetery, Mr. Sutherland said that if one of those people were off on vacation it created a hardship on the department and currently the lady that worked in the cemetery had a hard time taking vacation time. Mr. Sutherland said that the General Fund was in good shape and it was time to add people back to some of these departments and he realized that there were other department that needed additional employees such as Engineering but these positions need immediate help. He commented that seasonal

workers were unpredictable, one of the workers worked for two weeks and quit, he said it's hard to get good seasonal workers.

There were no further questions or comments: **VOTE: 5 Ayes – 0 Nays**

2. **Lynn and Shoemaker Streets Culvert Replacement**

**CM-19-55**

Manager Sutherland stated that originally, they were going to try and repair the culvert, but upon further investigation by the contractors, they advised the city to replace it and it needed to be done as an emergency. Councilman Lowe said that this was an issue that needed fixed as he had complaints from people stating they couldn't get in or out, and he wasn't sure how the garbage trucks were getting in and out. He also said he had a concern about the replacement because there was an issue with flooding in that area because everything West drains into a culvert and in turn it comes down to the Shoemaker and Lynn streets culvert. He said it was constantly flooding because the drainage wasn't big enough to handle. Mr. Sutherland stated that was why he was proposing a 4 ft. culvert which should work.

Councilman Albrecht moved to adopt alternative #1.

There were no further questions or comments: **VOTE: 5 Ayes – 0 Nays**

**Discussion**

1. **Update on 12<sup>th</sup> Street Pump Station** – he already gave an update on this during the City Council Manager report.
2. **Parks and Recreation Person** – Manager Sutherland asked Councilman Dunne to speak regarding this subject. Councilman Dunne stated that he wasn't clear on how much money could've been generated from events such as the Blues, Brews and Barbeque festival that they had recently. He said this was really a no brainer to have an employee coordinate events and not only at Spartan Stadium but other events such as Shawnee State graduation because a lot of those people wait around for three hours at a restaurant in a neighboring town. If the city would have something similar to the event they just had, they would have loads of families come in and spend money in Portsmouth. He added that in Huntington, Wva they made hundreds of thousands of dollars from their Little League tournaments. He said if there were someone in a position to develop these events it would put direct money in the city's coffers. He said there is supplemental value to it and gave an example "if you own a business on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and now people from outside the area think, we will make a habit of visiting Portsmouth". He said there were people in Portsmouth that weren't aware of some of the businesses in Portsmouth. He reviewed some of the do's and dont's of the event that they recently held such as having it more in the evening where the heat from the day wasn't so bad and possibly other parts of the year to host events. A Parks and Recreation employee could help with such things as this as well as current issues such as McKinley Pool and a variety of other spaces within the city. He also said that the long-term plan was to renovate the stadium and in the state budget there was space for a cultural facility's grant and we need to show that we're using the stadium as a cultural facility and that grant was due in about a year. He added that the grant was extremely valuable and he didn't believe that the Detroit Lions or Cincinnati Bengals would renovate the stadium, but we have an incredible argument to the state to say that we need to renovate the stadium because we're entering into the 100<sup>th</sup> season of the NFL and this was something we could do to preserve a historical facility. He said that he believed this would work much smoother if there was someone working on it full time.

Councilman Lowe said he agreed with Mr. Dunne and he wasn't too big on waiting on industry to come to the city because he's been hearing that since the 1970's or even earlier and we've never gotten anything like that and the city needed to look outside the box on bringing events here. He said people come here as a get-away for the cabins out in Shawnee forest and he's all for developing the river front and adding more camping to draw more people.

3. **Utility Bill Increase** – Manager Sutherland asked Councilman Meadows to state his concerns regarding the water bill. Councilman Meadows stated he was shocked when he opened his last bill and it had gone up \$20.00 and for whatever reason they said he had used 2,000 gallons of water. He said that Manager Sutherland had mentioned that he had contacted a company that could do a study about the utility billing. Manager Sutherland stated that they would look at water rates, but they also do storm water fees and sewer rates. He asked that everyone put politics aside, because the infrastructure of the city needed to be taken care of and in building a new water plant, we have to have it. Think about what happened last summer and if the plant was gone, the whole system was gone. Everyone knows the sewer issues that the city had faced, the storm water fees have been talked about and there were a lot of ways to approach it by looking at impervious square footage or flat rate. He believed the best thing was to get an independent firm to review and advise the direction the city should be going and hopefully we would get a better picture of what needed to be done. Mr. Meadows suggested a consultant and he understood that it cost money but the firm could look at it from an independent point of view and advise us where we could do better, what we need to change and how we could maybe spread the cost a little bit more. We've got to try to get a handle on this other than continually raising the rates. He doesn't have trouble paying the \$20.00 more, but there were some people on a fixed income that don't have that \$20.00 extra to pay. He would like the Manager to get Council the information and a price and let Council take a look at it and discuss it in more detail and decide if it was worth the expense to retain them.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m. on a motion by Councilman Meadows.

Submitted by: *Diana Ratliff* – City Clerk