

**MANAGER’S CONFERENCE MINUTES**  
**Portsmouth City Council Meeting on**  
**July 27, 2020 – 7:10 p.m.**

Members present:

Sean Dunne	1 <sup>st</sup> Ward
Charlotte Gordon	2 <sup>nd</sup> Ward
Kevin E. Johnson	3 <sup>rd</sup> Ward
Andrew McManus	4 <sup>th</sup> Ward
Edwin Martell	5 <sup>th</sup> Ward
Thomas K. Lowe	6 <sup>th</sup> Ward (Absent)

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

1. **OWDA Resolution for Water Plant Design** **CM-20-43**

Manager Sutherland reminded Council about the presentation that Chris Ruggles from Strand & Associates gave to Council. He said this was the next step in moving forward with the water treatment plant. The City needed to be able to apply for a loan for the design of the plant. He said that he believed it to be around \$530,000 and the next step if the loan is received, would be starting construction, the principal of the loan will be rolled over into a construction loan which they were sure they would have to borrow some of the money to build the plant.

Vice President Dunne motioned to adopt alternative #1.

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

2. **Resolution Opposing Racism at School Athletic Events** **CM-20-44**

Manager Sutherland stated that Councilman Dunne had approached him about a resolution opposing racism at school athletic events. He said that the aim in the resolution could be tweaked but the end result would be a good goal.

Vice President Dunne motioned to adopt alternative #1.

Councilwoman Gordon asked if referees would be consulted, she said that she knew that they probably were speaking with Principals, Schools and Athletic Directors but what about the other people on the court or field depending on the sport and Councilman Dunne replied that he envisioned that referees would require training. He said if you ask people if racial taunts, racist behavior, racist statements etc. should be prohibited from sporting events the strong majority would say “yes”, but then you have to hammer down the definition of what was meant by racial taunts, racist behavior and racist statement; he felt that it was important for referees to be trained in this subject. He said that they were seeing various hand jesters from white supremacist groups that could be made and nothing could be said. There were a variety of other things, they’ve had reports of people doing race taunts with the outfits they’re wearing and it would also be possible for a referee to miss certain behaviors because obviously their focus is on the game. The OHSAA should also have an enforcement option of being able to review video that came from certain events in case a referee does miss something, but he believed they needed to be trained. Mrs. Gordon asked if there was training available for referees, Mr. Dunne replied that there was no language in the OHSAA bylaws that spoke about racism specifically which is a very serious. He explained that they do have things like unsportsmanlike conduct and an option where a school’s Principal was essentially the Judge and Jury, and the current process had failed, which was why he was putting forth a state-wide policy that all schools in every region were bound by.

Solicitor Haas made a point of clarification, that this wasn’t the City Council saying that “we’re going to do this”, this is just a resolution suggesting changes to the Ohio High School Athletic Association rules. If this is adopted, it lets the OHSAA know that the City of Portsmouth would like to see these changes made.

Councilman Dunne stated that they couldn't force referees into training or force schools to properly discipline athletes, coaches and fans etc. based on racist behaviors or statements. He felt that more cities should pass this resolution or something similar to it and believed that County and State Representatives should back this, because it's long overdue. Councilman Martell explained that this was to allow schools and institutions to jump on board and back this and he invited all school board members or anyone that would like to have a conversation about what the resolution meant or why Council was doing it. He said getting the school boards backing would speak volumes to the OHSAA and to leaders and representatives in our state. Councilman Dunne stated that he and Councilman Martell had a very productive meeting with representatives from Portsmouth High School who shared some of the stories that were appalling and at the same time he was very impressed with the type of leaders in the Portsmouth High School system in both academic and athletic. He believed they would also commit to try to recruit other schools to sign onto this and if we had School Boards throughout this region, County Representation and State Representation backing this it would make a very powerful statement. He understood that OHSAA had a full plate currently trying to make schedule and policies during the COVID pandemic, but he thought it was long overdue and hopefully the actions by Portsmouth City Council will influence policy for the State of Ohio.

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

3. **Acceptance of COVID Emergency Grant**

**CM 20-45**

Manager Sutherland stated that this was an acceptance of a grant in the amount of over \$32,000 to reimburse the Police Department for PPE that had to be purchased when the COVID-19 issue started. The City had already been awarded the money and there was no matching money involved.

Vice President Dunne motioned to adopt alternative #1.

Solicitor Haas asked if emergency wording was needed and Manager Sutherland said that we could but according to Laura Davis, there wasn't a big hurry.

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

**Discussion**

1. **Decriminalization of Marijuana** – Vice President Dunne said that he shared information with the City Manager and City Solicitor of legislation found in about 13 other Ohio municipalities. He thought the most common revision was that possession of up to 200 grams was a fine of \$-0- and the motivation behind this was to prevent young people from starting early in life with a criminal conviction. It would also rebuke some of the things that have gone on with the war on drugs particularly in terms of race and he thought it moved toward a more sensible policy of harm reduction to more serious drugs. He would like to join other cities that have developed legislation and believed that it would be great for our city. He moved that it be put on the City Manager's agenda for the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:22 p.m. on a motion by Vice President Dunne.

Submitted by: *Diana Ratliff* – City Clerk