

MANAGER’S CONFERENCE MINUTES
Portsmouth City Council Meeting on
September 13, 2021 – 7:20 p.m.

Members present:

Sean Dunne	1 st Ward (Absent)
Charlotte Gordon	2 nd Ward
Kevin E. Johnson	3 rd Ward (Absent)
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 and Solicitor John Haas and Auditor M. Trent Williams was absent.

1. **SPARTAN STADIUM USER FEES** **CM-21-79**

Manager Sutherland said that this would establish fees for the use of Spartan Stadium because there had been issues with the stadium not being cleaned up after events and keys not being returned.

Councilman Martell motioned to accept alternative #1.

There were no questions or comments: **VOTE: 4 ayes – 0 Nay**

2. **FIRE DEPARTMENT PURCHASE OF EMS LIFT SYSTEM** **CM-21-80**

Manager Sutherland stated that this was for the cot and load system for the Portsmouth Fire Department. He said they do not currently have a power lift system and they had run into issues where they had a large person and had to wait for another squad to bring a power cot to be able to move this person to the hospital. The FD had been appropriated \$15,000 previously in the CIP Budget in the hopes that there would be grant money through the BWC but since then, the BWC had cancelled their grant program. They’ve asked that this be passed on an emergency basis.

Councilman Martell motioned to accept alternative #1.

There were no questions or comments: **VOTE: 4 ayes – 0 Nay**

3. **AMENDMENT 1316.02 TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP** **CM-21-81**

Manager Sutherland said this would limit the sell of property that had code enforcement issues, however he had mixed emotions on this topic because what if there was someone who was a legitimate purchaser who was going to take the property and fix it up. He hoped this could be worded in such a way that if they allow the transfer of property, the buyer would have a certain number of days to fix the infractions. Councilwoman Gordon said there was a property in her ward that had finally been torn down, but for the past 20 years it had kept changing hands. Mr. Sutherland said that apparently Andy and Justin have written up code enforcements on several properties only to have the owners sell the property to someone else before fixing the infractions. He said he didn’t have a problem with someone buying a fixer upper but if they do not intend to fix it, they shouldn’t be buying it. Solicitor Haas advised that the seller should be disclosing anything that would affect the title such as condemnation etc., the buyers should be aware of it and if not, they could sue the seller to get their money back. Mr. Sutherland said some of these were being sold cheap and there was no inspection and not going through a mortgage process. Councilwoman Mosley said that this happened on her street. Solicitor Haas said the condemnation order would follow the property and if someone else bought and the time was up to fix it, then they’re time was up, unless they could convince someone in the city to give them more time to work on it, but that was the risk of buying a condemned property. He said that in bigger cities there were regulations that if you transfer property that had had work done on it that wasn’t permitted, there were all kinds of issues. He wasn’t against it but he needed more time to think about it because we would like to keep

it on the tax roll if possible. Councilwoman Gordon said that was what we wanted because there was a housing shortage but these type of properties kept getting people moved into them. She said in looking at our firefighters, it was also a risk for them to go into these houses at any point and time. She asked if there was a happy medium and not allowing them to be passed off to another person who would keep it reckless. Solicitor Haas asked for a little more time to do some research.

Councilman Martell motioned to accept alternative #3 – take no action.

There were no questions or comments: **VOTE: 4 ayes – 0 Nay**

Discussion

1. **Lease of Alley 926 4th Street** – Councilwoman Gordon asked if there were any drawings yet and Manager Sutherland said he had not received anything and he would like this removed until he had received something from the owner.
2. **Parking Zones in Municipal Lots** – Manager Sutherland said this was pertaining to the 4th Street Parking Lot south of Coffee at the Lofts. Different scenarios were discussed especially the 2-hour parking around the perimeter. Councilwoman Gordon said that there were still cars being parked in the lot that had expired plates or no plates and several businesses had complained that their customers had nowhere to park. The Police Department had towed away some cars that had expired plates or no plates but she wasn't sure if it was people entering addiction services and if they were leaving their cars park in the lot for the 9-weeks that they were in rehab. Solicitor Haas asked if anyone had spoken to the businesses that were taking up this parking and Councilwoman Gordon said that she had spoken with one but not the other. Manager Sutherland said that they would look at it and come up with a plan.
3. **14th Street Center Support** – Councilman Martell will be emailing Council 14th Street Community Center's financials and some of the programs that they offer. He said that our youth needed a safe place to go and Center offers that to the youth. They also get fed there for free, it doesn't matter who they are, if they come in, they get fed. He would like to see the city provide them with an annual support such as what the city does for Main Street Portsmouth and Friends of Greenlawn Cemetery. He felt that it was important to support the work they were providing to the youth. He said that some of these children do not have anything and he knew what that was like and wished he had had a safe place to go when he was a kid. The knowledge that they have their Soul Food fundraiser coming up soon. Manager Sutherland stated that he could build it into the Community Agency Funding or the Cultural Affairs, Clerk Ratliff stated that they were reminded this year to apply for the Cultural Affairs grant, but the city never received an application, she thought that maybe a different person was handling it this past year and encouraged Councilman Martell to have them apply in February. Manager Sutherland will build it into the budget.
4. **Under Bridge Activity on East End** – Councilman Martell stated that he was contacted by Jordan Wheeler who had concerns about the folks that work at the railroad because there were some activities with the homeless community going on underneath that bridge that posed a safety risk for the railroad workers. There have been some altercations and he would like the City, Chief Brewer and the Railroad to get together to combat the situation and come up with ideas on how to alleviate some of the situations that were going on under there. Mr. Martell said that we don't want to just kick them out of the area, but we want to find help for them if they are homeless or if they have mental health issues, we want to find solutions for them. John Esterly who is the Chairman of the State Legislative Board for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and represented the labor side. He said tonight they had a member of the Norfolk and Southern's management team present because this was a topic, they both feel very strongly about. He said this was a safety issue for their crews and the area under the viaduct was where the trains stop to recrew and there was a lot of activity, foot traffic, people getting on and off trains and this was not just a casual occurrence that happened once in a while, it was something that happened every day, several times a day. He had toured the area where there were some encampments, not only to the left of the track but under the viaduct itself. He wasn't here to ask Council to solve homelessness or drug use, but they wanted to offer to be part of the brainstorming with whatever they could do to help relocate those folks that were living there currently and help the city going forward. Councilwoman Gordon asked if it was railroad land or city land and he said it was both. Right by the tracks belonged to the

railroad but right under the viaduct belonged to the city. He understood that there was a plan to cut back the brush on both of the properties that would hopefully make it a less attractive spot to camp. Mr. Martell proposed the possibility of installing some type of fencing and using it as a storage area. He asked the railroad and others to keep the dialogue open to come up with a solution for these folks. Solicitor Haas stated that at one point the homeless caught the viaduct on fire. Tony Edwards of Norfolk and Southern said that Code Enforcement had spoken with the NS Police about the situation and Code Enforcement said that they would clean up the vegetation and NS said they would pay for their part and they would do whatever they could to help. He said there was drug paraphernalia, needles etc. and that the people that work for NS were their main priority, but they were willing to help in any way possible. He said they have environmental people on staff that would be able to come in and assist and contractors that would take care of anything that was hazardous, but they were waiting on the OK from the City. Manager Sutherland said that this was something that needed to be worked on immediately. The contact information is: John Esterly Chairman of Ohio State Legislative Board for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers: 614-284-5876 – john.s.esterly@gmail.com
Tony Edwards – Norfolk & Southern Railroad – 276-870-3223 – tony.edwards@nscorp.com

5. **Electric Charging Stations** – Councilwoman Gordon stated that they had a visitor at the Museum that had a Tesla and wanted to know if Portsmouth had any charging station and of course she had to tell him that we didn't so he stopped somewhere else to charge his car. Councilman Martell said that with the growth of our city, this was something that was going to be needed. The manufacturing of vehicles was moving in that direction because it was a savings with not having to buy gas. He had been speaking with Community Development Director Shearer and there were currently no grants available that would be able to help with the charging stations, however she did find a company that charges a fee per hour for charging which wasn't much (\$2.00 an hour); area businesses would be able to advertise on the machines could help bring that cost down a little. He would like to see about putting brochures or maps of Portsmouth on the station with restaurants or recreational places while the vehicle was charging. Councilwoman Gordon said it would be a form of advertising for the city also, because the visitor had gotten on goggle maps to find out where charging stations were located. Mr. Martell stated that the charging stations were universal and most manufacturers use the same adaptors. He said these charging stations take 1-2 hours to charge completely, but one station could service 2 vehicles and the price per station was \$14,000-\$15,000. He added that AEP had a grant available next year and he was thinking a good location would be close to SSU. Manager Sutherland said that Director Shearer had gotten a quote and the location suggested was directly behind the city building parking lot. Mr. Martell advised that SSU was going to all electric vehicles for their maintenance staff and campus. He said that the need for them will continue to climb and right now they could be obtained for a lower cost.
6. **Addition to the art wall for 2022** – Councilman Martell said the Portsmouth Street Art project had been doing a great job with the wall that they had been given and with maintaining the wall and he would like to see about extending some of the wall for them to maintain for 2022. Manager Sutherland stated that it would need to be measured off this time and the Clerk suggested taking pictures also to give to the manager so that he has something to work from for a Council Letter.

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 p.m. on a motion by Councilman Martell.

Submitted by: *Diana Ratliff* – City Clerk

For the full audio version of the Manager's Meeting, please go to www.portsmouthoh.org under City Manager 2021 "Audio".