

MANAGER’S CONFERENCE MINUTES
Portsmouth City Council Meeting on
September 14, 2020 – 7:05 p.m.

Members present:

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

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

1. **Cares Act Funding** **CM-20-55**

This was removed from the City Manager’s Agenda and added to City Council’s agenda due to time restraints.

2. **Increased Appropriation Fund #621** **CM-20-56**

Manager Sutherland stated that an alley had collapsed and had to be repaired, it was located by the old phone company building on 16th Street. There was a sewer blockage which was a little too much for our crews to handle and an outside company was hired to complete the job. There was a pump and motor issue at the sewage treatment plant in the pumping station and a replacement will be needed.

Vice President Dunne motioned to adopt alternative #1.

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

3. **Appropriation for Franklin Furnace Booster Station Design** **CM-20-57**

Manager Sutherland stated that in the Franklin Furnace and eastward was starting to see some development and the city was currently meeting water demands, but if it continued to grow there’s a concern that the city would not be able to provide an adequate amount of water in that area. The thought process was to be proactive in getting a pumping station designed which would go a long way when asking for other grant funding to build the station. He said that \$110,000 would prepare the city for funding, plus give the city something to be able to build on. He advised that to build the pumping station it would cost \$500,000 because it would need to be bigger because of the area it would service.

Vice President Dunne motioned to adopt alternative #1.

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

4. **ODNR Grant Application Riverfront Soundstage Seating** **CM-20-58**

Manager Sutherland stated that this was to fix the area around the Riverfront and Soundstage and provide better and safer seating. The old concrete and railroad ties were removed and there was a potential design idea. The design includes a terrace area with concrete barriers going down from the top of the levee down close to the soundstage and will be handicapped accessible with ramps. The rough estimate was around \$361,000 which this grant should take care of about half of it. The city will continue to apply for other grants to help offset the cost. Mayor Johnson ask if it would accommodate the flooding that takes place in that area, Mr. Sutherland replied that it was designed with flooding in mind and it would take just a little bit of clean-up.

Vice President Dunne motioned to adopt alternative #1.

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

Discussion

1. **Tax Delinquency and Schools** – Vice President Dunne stated that the system currently in place was not working all that well. 50% of Tax collections from property taxes went to schools and the inability to collect taxes in the city directly damages our school system. He understood that the County was responsible for the property tax collection but there needed to be a point where the city took a step back to say “this is not working very well.” He wasn’t sure if it was the system developed by State that was failing or if it was those that were meant to be following the system that weren’t properly collecting the taxes. He requested that someone from the State come in and tell us what was going on and how the system could be improved. He had started a program with students from Shawnee State University mapping the amount of taxes due to the city throughout different wards and the numbers were crazy. He stressed that all the money not being collected was not being invested in our schools and other services and that it was worth asking how the system could be improved. He requested a Resolution to send to the State to ask for assistance, because the current system wasn’t working; the school kids were suffering because of it and so were others. Councilwoman Gordon said that it was suggested before for the City to send the County a bill for all of the unpaid taxes and then have them pay the city. She said over 50% goes to the schools and 20% goes to the seniors and those two populations really need it and that if the money was going to the schools, it might make our schools more attractive and entice people to move here. She added that it was a very important issue but doesn’t seem to be on the forefront of the County Commissioners. Mr. Dunne said that some of the businesses were not paying their taxes but using our services, such as if the Police would get called to their business. He advised that other areas would open up options for people to purchase the property tax owed and then charge individuals 10% on top of the taxes owed. Mayor Johnson asked that before we involve the State, could we reach out to the County Commissioners or the office that handles this and tell them about our plight. Mr. Dunne replied that his last two emails to the Commissioners have gone unanswered and one was from one year ago. Mr. Johnson stated that it would probably be best if we reached out to the County first because he had always found the County very easy to work with and accommodating. Mr. Dunne stated that he didn’t think it would do any good and would like to move forward with a Resolution to ask the State for assistance.
2. **Boat Parking and Storage** – Vice President Dunne asked Solicitor Haas about a separate Ordinance for boats. Councilwoman Gordon stated that we need something written so that the law could be enforced. Solicitor Haas stated that one of the problems the city would have, would be when you change the law and make something illegal and that he would have to do some research. Mrs. Gordon asked if there were a way to have them clean up the lots that have grass growing up and around stored trailers? Mr. Haas stated that would fall under a different ordinance that could be used. Mrs. Gordon restated what Mr. Haas had said in that there was nothing that could be done and the city will never be able to change the way it looked. Mr. Haas replied that a boat wouldn’t last forever or if the property was sold the next owner would have to comply. Mayor Johnson stated that he would like to see the Ordinance move forward. Solicitor Haas advised that he would do some research.
3. **Art District** – Councilwoman Gordon stated that there had been a natural growth with Arts, Cultural and Innovation going from the campus at the Vern Riffe Center towards Gallia Street. There were a couple of computer places, a comic book store, The Roy Rogers Museum, Southern Ohio Museum, the Scioto County Historical Museum in the Annex, Cirque d’Art, the Innovation Hub along with several individual artists and thought that it would be nice to designate that area as an Arts, Culture and Innovation District to attract like-minded people that were of the creative or performing arts. She suggested when COVID is no longer an issue, she would like to see a designated day such as the second Saturday of each month in which everyone could be opened. Someone had suggested doing open workshops in the studios and she thought this would be a nice addition to the downtown. Vice President Dunne echoed Mrs. Gordon’s sentiments. He asked her if there was a certain policy that had been developed from other cities? She stated that Tracy Shearer had asked MKSK during the meeting about guidelines and was told it wasn’t as difficult as setting up a historic district. She will find the language needed to be used to designate the area. Manager Sutherland stated that he would need the boundaries and the language Mrs. Gordon had mentioned, such as: Shawnee State University at Waller

Street, to Gallia and west to Washington Street. Mrs. Gordon said that indeed it would stretch a little further than Chillicothe and Gay Streets and was certainly a district that could grow. Solicitor Haas stated that if given the framework he would draft or form a Resolution.

The meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m. on a motion by Vice President Dunne.

Submitted by: *Diana Ratliff* – City Clerk