

MANAGER’S CONFERENCE MINUTES
Portsmouth City Council Meeting on
December 14, 2020 – 8:55 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 (Absent)
Edwin Martell	5 th Ward
Dennis Packard	6 th Ward

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

Health Department Commissioner Chris Smith spoke regarding the vaccinations for COVID and provided an outline of how the vaccines would be distributed. He commended his staff and Belinda Leslie that had done an amazing job filling in for him while he was stationed abroad. He stated that the Pfizer vaccine was being distributed to 10 hospitals in Ohio but we weren’t one of them. The second set of vaccines hopefully will arrive December 22, 2020, which would include approximately 500 doses to the City Health Department and 500 doses to the County Health Department. The local hospitals would receive their own allotment as well as Long-term care facilities which will be taken care of by CVS or Walgreens Corporate Offices. The Health Department will take care of the people within the Health Department that do direct medical care, the city EMT’s including the Fire Department EMS and then they will fill in the gaps of any healthcare workers or long-term care facilities that didn’t receive their own allotment. He said after that they will continue to receive shipments; the next group will be the Fire and Police Departments and then the general public starting with people that have medical conditions or that were at risk. He said that it would probably be close to June 2021 before they get everyone that wants to take the vaccine vaccinated. He asks that people continue to social distance and wear their masks. He added that they will be working together with other agencies to get one message out to the public so that everyone was on the same page. He hoped that by Thursday the EMA’s joint information center would be activated. He explained that there were systems in place and they had practiced for this type of emergency since 9-11. He said that he was proud of City Council for implementing the mask ordinance, standing behind the social distancing and getting safety measures in place to take care of the community which in turn slowed the virus enough to where the hospitals weren’t overloaded. He said that the City did a great job. Councilwoman Gordon asked which vaccine that we would be receiving and he replied that it would be Moderna because the Pfizer had to have special freezing temperatures.

1. **Adoption of Scioto County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan** **CM-20-85**

Manager Sutherland stated that he emailed this out to Council but it was tough because of the volume. He said it was an ongoing process and just needed Council’s approval.

Vice President Dunne motioned to adopt alternative #1.

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

2. **Amendment of Salary Ordinance** **CM-20-86**

Manager Sutherland stated that all of the Union contracts had been negotiated and updated, but this would take care of the non-union personnel.

Vice President Dunne motioned to adopt alternative #1.

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

3. **Resolution for Dispatcher's Pension Pick-up**

Manager Sutherland stated that there was a change in the Dispatcher's pension and it was a requirement from OPERS for a resolution to be adopted reflecting the change.

Vice President Dunne motioned to adopt alternative #1.

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

4. **Year-End Fund Transfer for Court Security**

Manager Sutherland stated that this was handed to him today but he would like it added. There was a shortfall in Court Security and they were asking for an appropriation of \$41,000 to sum up the year-end. Councilwoman Gordon asked about the increase in health insurance and Manager Sutherland stated that it was for the previous year.

Vice President Dunne motioned to adopt alternative #1.

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

Discussion

Storefront Registrations – Councilwoman Gordon said that Akron was changing out their windows and she had sent some questions to them and they asked to wait until after the first of the year to reply. Councilwoman Gordon asked Manager Sutherland to put it back on the agenda after the first of the year. Councilman Martell went over some of the details for the Arts Commission and they were gathering information to prepare for their first meeting. Clerk Ratliff advised that Mr. Packard would need to name someone to that committee for the 6th Ward. Mr. Martell explained how the committee worked and that he would need to name someone to the committee from the 6th Ward.

Grant Process for Community Agency Funding – Councilwoman Gordon asked for a copy of the Hotel/Motel application and checklist as they would like to use it as a sample. Manager Sutherland stated that once they got it the way they want it; he would put it back on the agenda.

Confederate Flags – Councilwoman Gordon found the language that the State of New York used for their Ordinance which included hate speech, signs and symbols which included swastikas, Nazi Flag and the Confederate Flag. It absolved those that were used in an educational setting, museums and historical settings. She believed that Solicitor Haas would weigh in more on the subject regarding the 1st amendment. She said that they were aiming to create a city in which all citizens felt comfortable navigating all parts of the city, but when you go to the riverfront which is on city property, there were symbols of hate displayed, not all citizens feel safe, comfortable or welcomed. She said the goal would be to create a city where we all feel comfortable. The Unity Project had done a really good job launching a great campaign to be inclusive through art and to have all citizens stand together in all different parts of town.

Councilman Martell said that people could argue about the history of the confederate flag but there were National Historians who sided with the non-showing of the public flag. The flag is no longer a flag, it was a symbol and people see it as a symbol, a symbol that creates divisiveness between citizens, and something that causes this much divisiveness had no place in our society. He stated that when Shawnee State students visit with their families and take a tour of the University and surrounding area, they look at the river and see a confederate flag being flown, which was not welcoming. We're trying to create an all-inclusive city that is diverse and welcoming to ALL people. He asked about the message being sent to the area youth, kids who were learning about the Civil War because when he learned about the Civil War, he learned that one side was for slavery and the other side was against slavery. He said from a historical point that at one time that flag had a meaning and a purpose which showed which side you were fighting on, and the side that used that flag was for slavery. He said in the 1940's and 1950's it was used again in Southern States to show the fight for segregation and once again that flag was used as a symbol of hatred. After segregation was abolished and the African American civil rights movement started to come forward, the flag was then adopted by White Supremacist and racist including the KKK and was still being used by them as a symbol.

Vice President Dunne added that any symbol could change different directions over time and across different places, but the structural use of the confederate flag by fascist and Nazi's was essentially a long history of several decades of individuals that were opposed to the notion that all men were born equal. The response to the civil rights movement maintained that certain people were worth less than other people and the symbol was adopted by State Houses, as were a variety of statues of individuals that fought on that side. He said that slavery wasn't just confined to the United States or the South, there were ambitions for an international system of slavery which was one of the most wicked things in human history. He believed what was needed was to explore all of the legal options with the City Solicitor and maybe get a second legal opinion, to see what the overall procedure and the type of language that would be required. He said what it come down to would be "what could the city put into terms of agreement with someone that wants to use city space?" Councilwoman Gordon stated that the information that Solicitor Haas had emailed her was for California and would like to have more discussion when he was present. She would also like to research if there was fallout from the State of New York or any other states that passed legislation. Councilman Martell stated that landlords were capable of dictating what you can and cannot have or do on the property, such as "you can't paint these walls, you can't have dogs, you can't park on the grass" and things of that nature and as a city, we are the landlords of the city owned property and should be allowed to dictate what we can and cannot have on the land. Councilman Packard stated that if he were coming to this community and a culturally diverse person and saw the confederate flag, he would be offended or feel fear.

Portsmouth Edition Monopoly – Vice President Dunne stated that he had tried to develop this game with the SSU development foundation a few months ago to get it ready by Christmas but it didn't work out. There was a company that will make 1,000 games which would have different landmarks from the City of Portsmouth and his proposal would be to touch base with different businesses that would like to be involved. This will be good for resident's in Portsmouth, people that have left Portsmouth or students that were coming to Shawnee State to let them know of the things to do in the City. He was trying to have them use a "QR" code in the game so that when you look at a business, you would be able to scan the code and it would bring up the information regarding that particular business. It would cost the city approximately \$2,000 but would potentially be a profitable game to the city with possibly raising over \$10,000, but some of that would include the initial start up cost. He would like to establish an ACORN account to be paid out for something specific such as curb paint. He would work with SSU to create scheduling of painting curbs, estimating the annual cost of painting curbs on a regular basis which would be an innovative way of taking care of one aspect of street maintenance. It would take a couple of months to develop but would help the city.

Renewable Energy – He said that the State of Ohio wasn't doing as well as other states when it came to state administration leading on renewable energy. He stated that it was being seen in many other states, there was a lot of investment that was going through PACE Districts, but as far as state leadership it was not being seen. He noticed that Virginia as well as other states had developed trying to move to fossil fuel renewable energy by 2040 or 2050. He would like to explore what they had done in renewable energy and possibly do that in our city by 2040. He will continue his research.

Councilwoman Gordon asked if they had heard anything about the hotel site. Manager Sutherland stated that he had spoken with the Chief Building Official last week and he was going to send a letter to the owner to have some of the issues addressed.

Councilman Martell asked how the new Engineer was working out and Manager Sutherland stated that Mr. Prosch had started on November 30th and was currently working on a project on Richardson Road and was working with the Department of Natural Resources to resolve a flood issue on Front Street that had been lingering over the city since 2014.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m. on a motion by Vice President Dunne.

Submitted by: *Diana Ratliff* – City Clerk