



City of Ashtabula
Ashtabula City Council
Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting
Friday, April 21, 2023 at 8:30 AM
4717 Main Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004

Minutes

Opening of Committee Meeting

Call to Order

The meeting of the Ashtabula City Council Finance and Personnel Committee was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Committee Vice Chair Haines-DiGiacomo.

Roll Call

Members Present: Vice Chair: Ward 5 Councilor Jane Haines-DiGiacomo, Member: President John Roskovics

Absent: Chair: Ward 1 Councilor Kym Foglio

Officers Present: City Manager James Timonere, Interim Finance Director Carolyn Sheldon, Clerk of Council McKenzie Burgan

Visitors: Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills

Chair: Ward 1 Councilor Kym Foglio - Kym was present over the phone and called in after the roll call was complete.

Sunshine Law Certification

A quorum was established as defined by the Ashtabula City Council Rules of Order. The meeting met the requirements of the Ohio Sunshine Laws Open Meetings Act.

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Visitors

Guest Ward 4 Councilor Jodi Mills was present.

Finance Director's Report

March Reports

Interim Finance Director Carolyn Sheldon stated that the committee has the March expense and revenue report and statement of cash. Other than those reports, she does not have anything to report. She stated if the committee had any questions or concerns she would try to address them.

City Manager Timonere stated that the delay in getting the property tax in looked very concerning until we finally just got that. He asked if this was reflected in the March report, Mrs. Sheldon said no and he said it would be in April and Mrs. Sheldon said yes. Mr. Timonere said a lot of the low balances seen are just the timing of that. He stated that Mrs. Sheldon brought to his attention there is a little bit of concern in PI, but the more that he looks at that it is again a timing thing and the way he is looking at it, only because we had to pay for the three trucks that money went out even though it was all encumbered. We have not paid for the other end of it, such as the plows and dump part, and the lift truck was also another expense. Those four trucks add up to about \$400,000 that went out the door in just those two purchases plus our normal loans, and other debt payments that have

gone out. As the second half of the property taxes come in and as there is still the unappropriated 1.9 million dollar carryover from last year, when you see these balances they will be low, but there is money there, it is just either not allocated yet or we are waiting for the second half to come in. Vice Chair Jane Haines-DiGiacomo asked what PI stands for and Mr. Timonere stated it stands for Permanent Improvement. Mrs. Sheldon stated they have all the debt for the year encumbered and that includes November payments and like Mr. Timonere said we do not have the second half of real estate taxes, which hopefully will come in August. She believes at year-end we will be okay but we have about \$20,000 between now and that time. Mr. Timonere said he does not believe that includes any of the carryovers that we did not already allocate. Mrs. Sheldon said that is cash and does include your carryover. Mr. Timonere said he would have to look at that report again but he did not think that was the case. Member John Roskovics stated we got our first half of taxes and Mrs. Sheldon said we just got the first half this past week. Mrs. Sheldon said normally it comes in February or the beginning of March. Mr. Timonere said we did not request an advance on the property taxes because we did not think it would be into April before we got the first half of them. Mr. Timonere said if we are able to request an advance for the second half of the property taxes, we should just do it and keep an eye on everything. Visitor Jodi Mills asked if Mrs. Sheldon was happy with how things were going. Mrs. Sheldon asked if she meant income tax and Mrs. Mills said yes. Mrs. Sheldon said she has not looked at any numbers for April. Mrs. Mills said even for property tax. Mr. Timonere said he did not go back and look, but he thought, county-wide, collections were a little bit down, but he was not sure how that reflected on us. Mrs. Mills said these past few years Angie has been getting caught up with individuals who had not paid their property taxes in years and then you see the payments of a couple of thousand dollars being made and said she is not sure if this is being reflected here. Mr. Timonere said, of any increases, we see that it would be a very minor part of it. The only increases we would see would be in the reevaluations. It is the same number of taxpayers, just the values have gone up. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo said the reevaluations are done every five years and that happened about two years ago. Mr. Timonere said it was done two to three years ago. However, we are always a year back with the collections. Mrs. Mills said she is seeing homes being sold for way over what they were purchased for. Mr. Timonere said that does not do anything with the taxes unless they do some kind of adjustment, but typically once the county sets the home value, it is set. Mrs. Mills said until the next review and Mr. Timonere said yes. Mr. Timonere said he does not think many people went through the board of revisions this year as they did not report on this very much. If someone thinks their home value is too high, they can go to the board of revisions with an appraisal or sale price and say that their appraisal or purchase price was lower than what the home is appraised at and the board would review that. Mrs. Sheldon said she could send Mrs. Mills a comparison of what we received this year versus what we received last year. Mrs. Mills said she is just curious about where we are at.

Member Mr. Roskovics said he is curious about the JEDD boards. He asked what the JEDD boards would spend money on. Mr. Timonere said the JEDD boards are allowed to do anything that would advance economic development within the JEDD district. He said there are two different formulas here. There are funds the city receives for administering and for the water pollution control plant that comes out of the JEDD funds and then the JEDDs have their own separate bank accounts that are managed by the JEDD boards. For instance, the Ashtabula Township's JEDD, if the board determined that signage was lacking and it would improve economic development within the area, they could ask that the JEDD board spend some money on that. If some kind of contribution had to be made to a street project that ODOT was doing and it would enhance the area and access to business, these funds could be used for this as well. It has to be specific to economic development and enhancing the area. Mrs. Sheldon said that one thing the previous Finance Director did before she left was she made some prior year adjustments to the Ashtabula Township JEDD in February and that is what is reflected in the \$48,000 revenue in Ashtabula Township 802 and that is why it has an ending balance of \$63,000 in March. In April, Mrs. Sheldon did the distribution and they got that

revenue, so now that account is back where it normally is around \$20,000. Mr. Timonere said that Ashtabula Township gets a portion of this. Mrs. Sheldon said she just did that distribution this past week. Mr. Roskovics said he was just curious about how those JEDDs work. Mr. Timonere said one of the biggest problems the finance department has had with the Ashtabula Township JEDD was Family Dollar reporting their payroll to us in a lump sum and they do not break out the Ashtabula store and the Ashtabula Township store. Mrs. Sheldon said that has since been corrected. Mr. Timonere said it took a very strong letter from the solicitor's office for them to correct this, but for years that was one of the major issues, that they would send one report with just one distribution which would include the city income tax and the income tax from the JEDD area and they did not know what employee worked where.

Visitor Jodi Mills asked if the bed tax had a separate line item. Mr. Timonere said it is in the general fund on the very first page of the revenue report. They are at 30% of their target. Mrs. Mills asked if he was happy with the numbers now that they are doing this through the county. Mr. Timonere said it was more than what they were getting, so yes. They will have a good idea at the end of the year. He said that at the close of last year, it was up from previous years. Mrs. Mills asked if this had to be earmarked where it could be spent and Mr. Timonere said no as it is in the general fund. Mr. Roskovics asked Mrs. Sheldon about the general property taxes and the uncollected amount and asked what the collection percent would be now. Mrs. Sheldon said this would be in the April report. Mr. Roskovics asked if that is what we are getting and Mrs. Sheldon said yes, in the April reports. She said currently it shows 0% collected. Mr. Timonere said it is usually more than half of what we budget that we receive with the first collection, as some people pay a whole year versus others only paying half a year.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Timonere stated that two of the sanitation employees went through the CDL class. Both individuals passed their tests. Two more individuals were hired at Sanitation and they were able to shift people around within the city. He believes we are currently fully staffed but we will be having a few more shifts coming up. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked if the shifts were coming in sanitation. Mr. Timonere said the city has everyone where they need to be, but this will change as more moves come up. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked if this was city-wide and Mr. Timonere said that is correct. Mrs. Sheldon asked if she would be getting promotional letters for the employees who passed their CDL tests because it is a different rate of pay if they have their CDL. Right now they are being paid as laborers without CDL. Mr. Timonere said right and he thought those were already done. Mrs. Sheldon said no and Mr. Timonere said they would figure that out. He said this has worked out well with the company and the employees who went through it had very good things to say about them. They did their training in the conference room at City Hall and their maneuverability and walk-throughs of the trucks in the parking lot. They did have to go to Pittsburgh to take the test but it was no problem. He is looking forward to the issue of getting CDLs no longer being a problem. They do sign an employment agreement with the city, they have to be with us for three years and if they leave within that timeframe, there is a payback for the training.

Promotionals were done in both the Fire Department and the Police Department. There will be promotions coming from the Fire Department. Unfortunately, no one passed the promotional from the Police Department, so they have to figure out what they are going to do with another test there. He believes they are in the period currently where they are able to object to questions. He will check with the Civil Service Commission to see if any of that has happened. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked what Mr. Timonere means by object to questions. Mr. Timonere said that after the test is given, the officers have the ability to review the test and if they think they answered correctly or if the wording was wrong, they are able to question this.

He said other than that we are doing okay on the employee side of things. He did state that if anyone

knows anyone who is coming home from college or needs a part-time job, to let him know. He said he believes he has one application for part-time work and they need three to fill for the parks and one at City Hall to mow the properties that residents do not mow themselves. They do not currently have a person to mow the tall grass and will figure out a time when they can get staff out to do this as they are already receiving calls regarding tall grass. They posted this position with the max allowable hourly wage. Mrs. Mills asked if there was an age requirement for the part-time workers. Mrs. Sheldon said 18 years old. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked if we put a notice at our local college campus. Mr. Timonere said it went out in the paper, has been on Facebook, it is posted on the Job and Family Service website and Monster. Mrs. Mills said they could announce this at their City Clean Up. Mr. Timonere said we would take more than four part-time employees. Usually, they fill the parks, one or two floaters for sanitation and public works, and a person for PCD who would mow the properties. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked how many hours per week these positions are for. Mr. Timonere said no more than 29 hours per week. Mrs. Sheldon stated they usually average about 24 hours per week. Mr. Timonere said the mowing for the part-time worker at City Hall is a little different because if there is a week of rain you cannot mow. Mrs. Haines-DiGiacomo asked if we have ever employed females for these jobs. Mr. Timonere said he does not believe they have ever had a female apply, but as long as you can drive a truck with a trailer and a zero-turn, we will take you. Mrs. Mills stated she has noticed the open lots where houses were torn down the grass is getting really tall. Mr. Timonere stated that 90% of the yards we mow we do out of charity and not out of necessity. They spend around \$15,000 a year mowing other people's property.

New Business

None.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on May 19th at 8:30 a.m.

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Motion: Member John Roskovics moved to adjourn into Executive Session to discuss the employment of personnel; Vice Chair Jane Haines-DiGiacomo seconded.

Discussion: None

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Vice Chair Jane Haines-DiGiacomo, Member John Roskovics

Nays: None

Motion passed.

Finance and Personnel Committee Vice Chair Jane Haines-DiGiacomo announced the executive session would convene closed to the public. After the executive session was over, Finance and Personnel Committee Vice Chair Jane Haines-DiGiacomo reconvened the public portion of the meeting, with no action taken.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 AM by Vice Chair Jane Haines-DiGiacomo.

Attested By: McKenzie Burgan, Clerk of Council