THE CITY OF HURON, OHIO
Proceedings of the Huron City Council
Work Session Meeting Tuesday, March 10, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

A work session of the City Council of the City of Huron, Ohio was called to order by Mayor Sam Artino on Tuesday, March 10, 2020 at 5:30p.m. in the conference room of City Hall, 417 Main Street, Huron, Ohio.

The Mayor directed the Clerk to call the roll. The following members of Council answered present: **Christine Crawford, Mark Claus, Sam Artino, Joe Dike, Trey Hardy and Joel Hagy.** Member absent: **Monty Tapp**.

Also present: City Manager Andy White, Law Director Benjamin Chojnacki, Finance Director Cory Swaisgood, Assistant to the City Manager Mike Spafford, City Engineer/Zoning Inspector Doug Green, Executive Administrative Assistant and Clerk of Council Terri Welkener.

Old Business

Capital Improvements Committee
Mr. White explained that with a capital improvements committee, we are trying to put together a group to lead the charge with options for not only just City Hall building in the short run, but for all capital improvement projects for City facilities moving forward. Under Section 6 of the Charter and 121.01, there is a section for standing committees that allows Council to handle something like this. A committee can be created by a motion of any Councilmember and approved by a majority of the Council members, and the Mayor has the option to appoint as well. Mr. Hagy asked if Council creates these new committees, are there any committees that might be retired. Mr. White suggested retiring the Shade Tree Commission. Council members had a discussion regarding the issue of having too many committees. Mr. White suggested that staff lead the City Hall project and keep Council apprised of developments. The first step is to identify the problems and then come up with solutions. Mr. White suggested that we conduct a request for proposals or have a design/build firm come in, instead of staff trying to figure out how the building should function. There will be an outside cost upfront to hire someone to walk through every component of the building, but also the boat basin, the marina, the sea wall, the street department, the water plant – all of those properties are assets owned by the City and every year they break down a little bit. We need to make a comprehensive effort to manage our property. It makes sense to start with this building because it is in the central core of the business district. This is a big piece of property right in the middle of it and it doesn't lend itself to the vision of a prosperous economic development forecast. Mr. White asked that Council allow staff to run with the project. The Councilmembers agreed with that suggestion. Mr. Swaisgood asked for at least a short-term flow around the finance and zoning offices, and whatever can be done in the police department with the $50,000 to $70,000 budgeted, and have Council provide guidelines. Mr. Hagy suggested that the work should be prioritized as gotta have, wanna have, and would like to have. The department heads have already gone through this process, and this information was used to prepare the 2020 budget book. Asked by Mr. Artino if there has been any consideration of moving one of the departments out, Mr. Spafford said that staff is looking for Council's guidance on the minute, acute needs of City Hall specifically, as well as the overall City facilities plan. Mr. Spafford said there is a lot of talk about the street department's location and that it's a beautiful piece of lakefront property with a beach. There are a lot better uses for that property. The Parts and Recreation administration building on Main Street, which also has a lot of potential. City Hall is right in the middle of the central business corridor and screams 1974, it is very uninviting, and it does not encourage citizen involvement. There are short-term needs in terms of making sure the police department is functional, making sure our layout matches the community's needs, and that certain security needs are taken care of. Mr. White said that the immediacy is for functional purposes, staff needs to do a couple of things right now. The catch is that we may do

something now and then bring in the guys to tell us how to do it right. We are generating a lot more activity within the building and code enforcement operation and we are trying to direct everyone to the window so that staff is available right there. We can do some good there without too much modification that would significantly alter the building. There could also be some collaboration with the schools. There is a bus garage out on Sawmill, we have the 5-1/4 next to the utility for the power station, and parks and recreation has a building at Fabens Park. Council is looking at a map of 120 acres of empty space west of Wexford, while there is a utility garage on Lake Erie. If you have the big picture discussion to look at some of these priorities, then you can begin the next phase with the question of does this building warrant any more consideration, or has it served its useful like. If so, do you knock it down, repurpose it and move a city hall, if money was no consideration, to front Williams Street. There is so much lost property on both sides of this building.

Asked by Mr. Dike if there have been any prior discussions with past Councils regarding this, Mr. White said that the most discussion staff has had was when the walk-throughs with Council members were conducted. City Hall has always been in the same place, even after it was rebuilt. It is a significant challenge when you look at zoning laws and how you want to manage your property code. All you have to do is walk down this block and look at the various setbacks of the properties. The funeral home is where it should be, while the parking lot, the school and City Hall have acres of concrete. When it's raining the depression that exists between the two lots holds a couple inches of water for a few days due to a drainage issue. Most people do not want to spend money on City Hall, but it will eventually happen because it is only going to get more expensive.

Mr. White said that staff would furnish some upgraded number on the short-term fixes, and then start to solicit some input outside to get a firm that can walk us through this aspect and start a working file on a comprehensive property management program for the City's various parcels. Ms. Crawford that Tom Bode was in the Southport building for years and has a connection to Huron, and she was sure Tom would be willing to work on this.

Utilities Committee

Mr. White stated that separate from the Finance Committee, the specific nature of the utility function within the City has gotten a lot bigger, in the form of Huron Public Power and the Water Plant. The Water Plant is a big operation, and there are miles of storm drainage tiles throughout the City. There are hundreds of catch basins, and there are other utilities having presence within our right of way. There are also discussions about a broadband option. Mr. Swaisgood discussed the possibility of separating out the refuse collection into a separate fund so that the actual costs of that can be managed. Refuse pickup is currently a $1 Million operation intermingled with $6 Million of General Fund. We have an appropriate balance, but it is not paid attention to for 5 years, the expenses could exceed revenue, which could be missed because payroll picked up revenue some other way for income tax, for example. It would make sense have a separate utility fund.

Mr. Spafford said that there are a lot of operational long-term policy discussions that need to happen. When the City went through the refuse contract process, that was a pretty significant change. While Council could have those discussions in work sessions, it would take away from other items and business to be covered. We have housed a lot of the utilities discussions in various committees, which is an awkward fit at times. The goal would be having those discussions with the new utilities committee to talk about long-term goals and plans for Huron Public Power, what the storm water utility looks like in the future, we are 3 years into a 5-year refuse plan, and to make sure operational plans are vetted out. Mr. White stated that with regard to the financial operation, and harkening back to the budget that was just developed, we have $82 Million worth of infrastructure throughout the City, and there has been discussion whether we should put in motion the rate increases specific to water. We haven't had to do that yet and have scaled back some of the projects to be able to afford that in 2020; however, we just met this week with the union and with our sales (both internal and external sales to Erie County), they are at their peak. We can't see them any more water than

they are buying from us right now. That $1.5 Million plus an uptick internal to our residence customer base, plus the advent of a 1,500,000 tank at Phase I of Mucci, which will be growing exponentially with Phases II and III, the City needs to look at its operation. There a couple of option: (1) you could dial back the consumption from the County to serve our internal customer first, which means their rate is going to go up while the City's funds stay the same while creating internal capacity – Mr. White thinks that might turn into a political disagreement that then opens up the fact that Sandusky's got 15 million gallons of available supply, which would have an impact at our water plant, or (2) look at the rate structure and make adjustments for expansion plans. The plant is running 16-20 hours per day. There is a lot of wear on the engines running them at full power, shutting them down and then restarting them after 4 hours. All of the different systems in the water plant are taxed out, and what we are looking at is going to a 24-hour operation to meet supply, but also to benefit the infrastructure we have put in place. If you run the plant on a 24-hour basis, you can dial it back and run it consistently. Staff has proposed looking at the inclusion of 1 full-time equivalent that would allow the water plant to modify their shifts and to do 12-hour shifts with 2 shifts run 24 hours, which would eliminate the overtime. In a 2-week payroll, each employee would average out to 80 hours working four days per week and there would be overlap among employees. Jason Gibboney and his employees can talk about this in more depth, but in theory, it is a big conversation that needs to happen. In 2014 the plant was almost shut down because Sandusky was charging less than $1/1,000 gallons to our $2.86/CCF. We sold them 300,000 gallons per day back in 2012, whereas today we are probably closer to 1.5 million gallons per day. Mr. Hagy said that this is the reason staff is asking for the formation of a utilities committee. Staff is limited to try to be specialists in all of these different things. If nothing else, it would benefit everybody to have a conversation in another work session, Council meeting or finance committee, but with these rate modifications that Mr. White thinks have to be made over a 10-year budget at $0.15/CCF, which would generate enough money to keep paying for the upgrades. If those upgrades aren't made, it goes back to the supply issue and Mr. White believes that the City has a duty to service its citizens first. If there was a problem or some catastrophe, we would tell the County that we cannot provide that water supply to them – we have to give it to our citizens first. The City has that latitude within the contract; the problem is the contract is a 40-year contract, and we worked really hard to get that done because the last one was somewhere around 1974 and it kept getting extended. If the County were to go away, that would result in a loss of 40% of consumption. That doesn't relate directly to a dollar-for-dollar, but you would be looking at increasing your rates significantly.

Mr. Hagy asked what the purview of the utilities committee would be. The committee would cover electric (HPP), water, sewer and storm water. Mr. White stated that we have the Huron Sewer Monitoring Committee which was formed in response to a lawsuit in the 1970's when Huron had a treatment facility. Anytime the Erie County Commissioners are considering a capital project improvement or a rate modification, the Huron Sewer Monitoring Committee is supposed to get together to produce legislation to Council for approval. If Council doesn't approve the legislation, at least they have been heard, but they don't always do that. We have to contractually have these discussions with them. NDPS Phase 2 would also be included, as well as the issues with Beachwood Cove. We have all of the water to our north and all of these outlets in all of the residential properties. The County has a ditch maintenance program up to the incorporated line of the City, then they stop. The water runs good for a couple of years, then it mounds up and they have to come back to all of those property owners to the south and assess them again. Ms. Crawford said that her hometown of Seville is half the size of Huron and therefore don't have nearly the number of customers that Huron has, and they deal strictly in electricity. They have had a Board of Public Affairs since the late 60's to early 70's, which is a separate entity with seats up for election and that board reports to the City. The electricity sold is a huge part of their revenue stream, and Ms. Crawford was surprised the amount of revenue generated through the sale of public utilities. Mr. White stated that Huron Public Power (HPP) was established in 1999/2000 with one customer, the bank. We are a part of American Municipal Power (AMP) having an electrical supply grid from Minnesota all the way to Maryland. With the advent of what we have been doing in the Corporate Park and Mucci, HPP has just jumped up in consumption. Mr. Claus mentioned that the possibility of providing Vermilion with water is out there, with

the condition of their water plant. With the addition of 5 million gallons sold to Vermilion, the cost to up that production would cost a couple million dollars. Mr. Crawford mentioned what the water plant recently went through with the EPA stuff, being a reactive situation that a committee could have walked them through. That was an extra "out of nowhere" situation pushed onto staff for them to deal with. Mr. White said that this is a good example of why this type of oversight is necessary. When we look at what the City does when it doesn't have enough General Fund capacity to pay for law enforcement, fire or EMS, these other revenue streams become component parts. You are spending 200% of $1 for all of these things because police, street lighting and street resurfacing all become a part of your water rate, which if that's going on for 20, 30 or 40 years, you may find that you are increasing rates related to other expenses. It is politically difficult, but that water tower in downtown Vermilion doesn't have any supply in it. If that water tank gets filled up, lines will break downtown Vermilion.

Ms. Crawford stated that the City need a utilities committee. Council members and Mr. Chojnacki discussed the process to form the committee, which Council members agreed would be a permanent committee. Mr. Chojnacki confirmed that the motion to form the committee should be made in the regular meeting. In response to Mr. Spafford's question of if the charter allowed for more than two members, Mr. Chojnacki said there was nothing prohibiting the Mayor appointing a third member with experience in utilities, which member can be a private citizen. The name of committee will be "Utilities Committee." Mr. Hagy and Ms. Crawford agreed to be members of the new committee, and Mayor Artino will work on a citizen member. Staff would be involved as well.

Rental Registration/Bed Tax – Zoning Code Public Hearing

Mr. Swaisgood explained that the Finance Committee met on Thursday, although they didn't have a quorum, and that transient rental registration fee was to be recommended by the Tax Administration (Cory Swaisgood) and the Building Official (John Zimmerman). Those that did attend the Finance Committee meeting were in agreement that Council should consider a fee of $400 per unit, which would include one reinspection, with additional reinspections charged at $50 each. This fee will be reassessed every year by the Finance Committee at the fourth quarter meeting in December. Next year, the determination of the fee should be easier with 6 months experience under our belts. Mr. Claus confirmed that it would be looked at each January by Council, and confirmed that he would be making the motion in the meeting. Public Hearing #2 on the agenda relates to zoning section changes (allowing transient rentals of R-1 and R-1A zoned properties).

Public Hearing #1

Ms. Crawford confirmed that the Planning Commission did not recommend approval of Gary Savage's request. Mr. Green will give the background of the matter, and then Mr. Savage is entitled to present his case to Council. Mr. Chojnacki suggested that all further procedural questions be addressed in the regular meeting. Mayor Artino confirmed that the swearing in pertained to those individual participating in the hearing.

Economic Development

Mayor Artino said that he talked to Abbey Beamis about coming in for the work session on March 24th to go over the economic development process with Council, to get some input, and to discuss committees that are going to be involved.

KS Swim Assessment Study

Mr. Spafford said that staff met internally to put together policies, procedures and plans which he hoped to have finalized by Monday. Once it is finished, it will be sent out. The Safety Committee is meeting on Wednesday and Mr. Censer from KS Associates will be there. Mr. Censer agreed to come to the Work Session and/or Council meeting on the 24th, or that can be kicked to a later date. Ms. Crawford said that HJRD members have received copies of the study, but did not have a quorum to meet to discuss the study

on Tuesday. Parks and Recreation did, however, already have a plan rolling to implement some of the recommendations. Mr. Spafford said that a lot of the recommendations within the plan staff was already working towards. We feel that, at least internally, the City is still on its projected schedule to be in good standing by opening day. Mr. Hagy asked what the price tag is for all the recommendations. Mr. Spafford said that a lot of the recommendations are procedural improvements, so the cost would be additional personnel, trainings, etc. They have highlighted, and we are working toward, the installation of the anemometer. We are working with our communications company to custom build the anemometer system, with an approximate price tag of $20,000. The cost to run the wifi to the beach was built into the City's monthly installment plan. There are various materials and supplies, such as signage, buoys, chains and anchors around $25,000. The buoys would have some kind of concrete anchoring system that we would set around Memorial Day in preparation for the season with take-out on Labor Day. Mr. White said that the report itself qualifies that it is not a guaranty. Some of the indirect costs that we are not going to be thinking about right now is that the swim area as defined will become incumbent upon staff to manage because as the lake level changes, the swim area is going to change. With a depth of 4 feet, it is going to be moving around each year depending on what type of condition we are dealing with.

Pier Signs

Mr. Spafford said that staff is going back and forth with the Army Corps of Engineers – Buffalo Office to discuss the signs at the pier. Ms. Crawford asked if they are notorious for not communicating. Mr. Hagy asked what the Corps' plan for enforcement is. Mr. Spafford said that he didn't think that they necessarily had a plan for enforcement so much as this is just preemptive on their end. There used to be signage delineating property ownership, but there hasn't been since the Showboat remediation project. The Corps felt that the best practice would be to get the signs up. Mr. Spafford said that he asked if there could be at least delineation of ownership on the sign, and the answer back was that a change in design of the sign would take an act of Congress. Mr. Spafford said that they are working on bringing back the old wooden sign, which has been refurbished, and are just working internally on where the best location for the sign would be. Mr. White said that the City would not have enforcement authority on federal land, and therefore, the Huron Police Department will not be enforcing it. In a conversation with the Executive Director of the Lorain Port Authority, Mr. White learned that they have an enforcement arm that on occasion he was aware that they had sent people out to have people removed.

Adjournment

At 6:17 pm, Mr. Artino adjourned the meeting.

Terri Welkener

Terri S. Welkener, Clerk of Council

Adopted: 31 MAR 2020

Upon approval by the City Council, the official written summary of the meeting minutes will become a permanent record, and the official minutes shall also consist of a permanent audio recording, excluding executive sessions, in accordance with Section 121.01(III) of the Administrative Code.