

MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WORK SESSION OF OCTOBER 20, 2015

Mayor Strazdas called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The following Councilmembers were present: Nasim Ansari, Richard Ford, Patricia M. Randall, Claudette Reid and Terry Urban, Mayor Pro Tem Pearson and Mayor Peter Strazdas. Also present were City Manager Larry Shaffer, Deputy City Manager Rob Boullis, Finance Director Bill Furry, T&U Director Chris Barnes, Assistant City Engineer Jamie Harmon, Assistant Fire Chief Stacy French, City Attorney Randy Brown and City Clerk James Hudson.

Mayor Strazdas reviewed the agenda for the evening and indicated that the Fund Balance, including the \$427,227 from the State PA 84 of 2015 General Fund local road & bridge program, could result in better bonding rating, debt reduction potential and an adjustment to the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) as discussed at the City Council Retreat. He then deferred to City Manager Larry Shaffer.

Mr. Shaffer reviewed the estimated additional funds available for FY 2015-2016, spoke of investment in local roads and major roads, repairs to the Fire Pumper involved in an accident, relocation of the trail in Bicentennial Park near I-94, a cultural event, budget stabilization and efforts to obtain AAA Bond Rating status. Discussion followed.

Councilmember Urban indicated that this is the first time a stabilization fund has been proposed as part of the Fund Balance and could not determine a good reason to have one because it further restricts \$300,000 which would ordinarily be part of the Fund Balance. Discussion followed regarding financial stability, and City Manager Shaffer responded that this becomes one more tool used to obtain AAA Bond Rating status. Discussion followed.

Mayor Strazdas reviewed the option of moving some of the funds to the CIP and deferred to Mr. Shaffer, who thanked Finance Director Bill Furry and Deputy Finance Director Lauren Vanderveen for their work to come to an agreement to see how that might reasonably be balanced with regard to the distribution. He introduced T&U Director Chris Barnes and Assistant City Engineer Jamie Harmon, deferred to them for an explanation of the PACER Rating, a tool that was recently implemented that evaluates all of the roads in the City in order to determine the gradation of road repair needs. Discussion followed.

Mr. Barnes explained the system, described the process and reviewed the condition of the various roads. Discussion followed regarding the impact on the neighborhoods, Complete Streets Policy and the option of reconstructing versus repaving. Mr. Barnes discussed the funding needs and the number of miles involved and discussion followed.

Assistant Fire Chief French indicated that the repair cost for the 17 year old Fire Pumper involved in an accident was \$84,000 and, considering the age and miles on the unit, the best price the City could get for it is less than \$100,000; plus, they discovered that the mounts for the pump are cracked which means there would probably need to be repairs to the pump as well, so the repair cost could exceed \$84,000. Therefore, he proposed that the 2018-19 CIP be adjusted and requested that City Council consider approval of a new apparatus that is state of the art and meets current safety standards. Discussion followed.

Mayor Strazdas deferred to Mr. Shaffer, who explained the commitment a long time ago made by the City to relocate the bike trail in Bicentennial Park near I-94 onto City land along Portage Creek for a cost of \$210,000, or \$185,000 without a viewing stand. He explained that this action is contractually required; development can then take place adjacent to that land which has been discussed; and, he suggested that this be a part of the reallocation. Discussion followed.

City Manager Shaffer explained that the City has an opportunity to bring the Morehouse College Glee Club to Portage Northern High School Auditorium, February 26, 2016, as part of the diversity celebration of Martin Luther King Day 48 years after his death in Memphis, Tennessee. He indicated that the cost to bring the Glee Club to Portage Northern is \$35,000 for their flight, local transportation, room and board. Mr. Shaffer reflected on the plan to obtain the funds through solicitation of private funds that did not work out and produced zero dollars, so this event cannot happen without an appropriation. He said that he thinks he can find \$20,000 in the existing Cultural Events Budget with the need for a remainder of \$15,000 to make this opportunity happen. He indicated that his hope is that this would be the last time he would come to City Council to seek support for that; and, any future event would have to be privately funded, but this gives the opportunity for the City to demonstrate its commitment to diversity as part of a recognition of our commitment to celebrating the achievements of Dr. King and acknowledging in a positive fashion that Portage stands with those institutions and individuals who value diversity.

Lastly, City Manager Shaffer discussed the \$1.65 million to be applied to debt reduction which represents just over 50% of the total amount of money over the established 24% Fund Balance. Discussion followed.

In answer to the request from Councilmember Ford to discuss Major Streets, Mr. Barnes indicated that the City received notice in August of the receipt of \$261,000 in Federal safety funds to be used to reconfigure the traffic signal for motorists and pedestrians at Westnedge and Romence where a fatality occurred. He outlined the project and noted the need for a reallocation of \$100,000 for a local match that is required. Discussion followed.

At the request of Mayor Strazdas, Mr. Shaffer indicated he would present further information regarding the reallocation requests involving the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) items listed as Major and Local Streets, Parks & Recreation Trail and the Fire Pumper. When Mayor Strazdas indicated a possible hold on the Cultural Events request, Councilmember Randall asked that all of the items be considered and discussed for action. City Manager Shaffer concurred and mentioned the Budget Stabilization item would also be explained further.

In response to Mayor Pro Tem Pearson, Mr. Shaffer disclosed that the Cultural Event would be held indoors at Portage Northern High School Auditorium with 743 seats at \$10 each and would raise \$7,000. Mr. Shaffer concurred with Mayor Pro Tem Pearson and his understanding that there would be \$7,000, plus a one-time \$15,000 reallocation, and said the Administration would only spend what is necessary and would set up as a revolving fund with the residual to be used for future events.

At the request of Councilmember Reid, Mayor Strazdas asked City Council to provide any additional information on these matters to Mr. Shaffer by the end of the week. He set a Committee of the Whole Meeting for 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, November 3, 2015, in Conference Room #2, to discuss the proposed funding for the overage of the 24% Fund Balance. Discussion followed regarding priorities, CIP, budget stabilization and the unappropriated fund balance.

STATEMENTS OF CITIZENS: In response to Charles Pasco, 5526 Meredith Street, who expressed his dissatisfaction with the bike path on Kilgore Road near Sprinkle Road as it feels dangerous when he rides it, Mayor Strazdas referred him to Mr. Barnes, who indicated he has some good news for Mr. Pascal and offered to share this information with him after the meeting.

ADJOURN: Mayor Strazdas adjourned the meeting at 7:16 p.m.

James Hudson, City Clerk