

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE

AUGUST 26, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Chairman Jonathan Smith. Committee members present were Jan Materni, Jonathan Smith, and Barry VanHoozen. Also present were Bridgette Kabat, City Administrator, Laura Alkire, Law Director, Alice Godsey, Director of Public Utilities, and Matt Choma, Deputy Director of Public Utilities.

PRESENTATION OF GRASSY CREEK WATERSHED STORMWATER MASTER PLAN

Kathleen Smith, associate of Hazen and Sawyer, project manager of the Grassy Creek Watershed Stormwater Master Plan, was in attendance to make a presentation to the Committee. Ms. Smith discussed the public collaboration aspect of the plan. Mr. VanHoozen asked how many people were involved. Ms. Smith stated that they had at least fifty people at each of the three meetings that were held, and approximately thirty surveys were returned. Ms. Smith stated that they created a map that indicated issues with flooding based on the surveys and pictures provided by residents. Then when there was a storm event, Hazen went out and verified the information, however they did not go into back yards. Ms. Smith reviewed their recommendations including: inspection and maintenance of storm sewers and Grassy Creek, rehab in phases to minimize neighborhood disturbance, sewer improvements with taps for residents, and extend the sewer down Elm Street to the Maumee River. Ms. Smith said that there is a permit involved with that and they are currently evaluating that. Mr. Smith noted that a good portion of Grassy Creek is on private property, and it makes maintenance difficult. Ms. Smith said that residents went both ways on that. Some were agreeable to having someone go on their property to do maintenance while others were not. Ms. Smith said that they recommend removal of sediment in the creek. There was discussion regarding cleaning the creek and how effective it would be, Ms. Smith stated that even if there was a very clean creek from point A to point B, we would still have problems. Ms. Godsey stated that debris and sediment is a factor, but when you're looking at a ten-year storm event, there is additional infrastructure needed. Mr. Smith asked if the Administration is looking for any action on this plan at this time, and Ms. Godsey said they are not.

AWARD CONTRACT FOR ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR WWTP CAPITAL PROJECTS PLANNING

Ms. Godsey requested approval of a contract with Fishbeck Engineers in the amount of \$60,500 for engineering services to analyze the Wastewater Treatment Plant components and processes. Ms. Godsey said if this is approved as an emergency, they will have preliminary costs by November and can put them in the final 2021 budget. Mr. Smith asked how many responses we received. Ms. Godsey said that eight proposals were received. Mr. VanHoozen said that it seems like we just upgraded the treatment plant. Ms. Godsey said that this will look at things that were not included with the upgrade including looking at alternate chemicals for phosphorous removal. The Committee agreed 3-0 to recommend approval.

AWARD CONTRACT FOR ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR WATER SYSTEM MASTER PLAN

Ms. Godsey requested approval of a contract with Arcadis in the amount of \$149,854 for an update of the water system master plan. This was last done in 2010. Ms. Godsey said that Arcadis will do a comprehensive analysis of the water system and will finish it by June, 2021. She stated that Arcadis was selected from the four firms that responded to the RFQ. Mr. VanHoozen asked if the E. River Road project was part of the old water master plan. Ms. Godsey explained that the E. River Road project is to save a fee paid to the Northwestern Water and Sewer District and will pay for itself within five years. This plan includes looking at growth areas, updating the water demands, determining if there is a need for more elevated storage and if the pump stations are adequate. The Committee agreed 3-0 to recommend approval.

AUTHORIZE OPWC APPLICATION, ROUND 35

Ms. Godsey requested approval to submit a grant application to the Ohio Public Works Commission in the amount of \$175,000 for lining of the Grassy Creek Sanitary Sewer Interceptor from Maple Street to Cherry Street. She said that the total project cost is \$350,000 to \$400,000. Mr. Smith asked if we will move forward with this project with or without the grant. Ms. Godsey said that we will. She said that we'll know by the end of the year if we've been awarded the grant so it can be included in the 2021 budget amendment. The Committee agreed 3-0 to recommend approval of the request.

SEWER CREDITS TABULATION

Ms. Godsey distributed a list of three sewer credits that were granted since the last meeting. Mr. Smith thanked her for bringing it to the Committee's attention.

DELINQUENT PAYMENT PENALTIES

Mr. Smith asked if we save envelopes to prove that late payments were not postmarked on time. Ms. Godsey said we do not. Ms. Kabat said that they checked with other communities regarding their procedures. Only Fulton County and the Northwestern Water and Sewer District keep envelopes for a two-month period. Mr. Smith recommended holding the envelopes for a month or two. Ms. Alkire said that legally, the City has no obligation to prove when we got the envelope. Mr. Smith said that he believes this could protect the City because otherwise there would be no evidence that a payment was late. Ms. Alkire said that it is a credibility issue, not a proof issue, and she's not sure it is reasonable that any service provider would keep envelopes. Mr. VanHoozen said that he was happy when legislation was approved stating that as long as a payment was postmarked on time penalty would not be charged. He said that our defense is the process, and his concern is the 12 or so customers that have complained in the last several months about payments they say were mailed on time but were not received on time. There was a lengthy discussion about the process of processing payments, alternative ways to pay bills, other options to assist requests, and what could be done to resolve the customer complaints regarding payments that were mailed on time previous to the newly enacted legislation. Due to some recent requests made to council, Mr. Smith asked why council is referenced as being able to waive late fees. Ms. Alkire said that she

cannot recommend doing something retroactively, as late fees are set by code and ordinance. Ms. Materni said that she thinks the new language will take care of this issue moving forward. Mr. VanHoozen said that he appreciates that we can't do something retroactively because it would open Pandora's box, but he feels for those who have experienced this issue.

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Godsey called attention to a handout given to the Committee. Ms. Godsey said that it is an insert that is going out with the September bills.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Smith, Chairman
Public Utilities Committee

Next meeting: Wednesday, September 23, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.