Monroe Council Minutes
Regular Meeting of Council
October 27, 2020 – 6:30 p.m.
233 South Main Street, Monroe, Ohio

Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Frentzel opened the regular meeting of Council at 6:30 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Council Members present: Tom Callahan (remote), Jason Frentzel, Keith Funk, Anna Hale (remote), Todd Hickman (remote), Christina McElfresh (remote), and Robert Routson

Approval of the Minutes

None.

Visitors

John Robbins referred to a newspaper article that reported Council recently discussed face masks. Some people have tried to control what other people do or say and I would call this bullying. Maybe even thought police. As individuals we do not all think alike or speak the same. It is a bad situation when we are told what to think or say. This is what leaders in the past and present have done. People like King George, people in Russia, Germany, China, North Korea, Iran, and several American colleges. If you speak differently, apparently you can be treated like one turkey out of a flock by tying a red ribbon around a turkey's neck. May Monroe always have free speech and free thought as our founding fathers said freedom and liberty does not come from government. Freedom and liberty come from our creator.

Committee Reports

Reporting on Planning Commission activity, Mr. Routson reported that some changes to the Planned Unit Development (PUD) in Monroe Crossings Subdivision were made. These are preliminary changes and, once the final plat is ready, it will come to City Council for approval. One of the changes involved vinyl that we didn't allow for quite awhile. We did allow vinyl that is a heavier grade. This last phase in Monroe Crossings is going to be pretty nice homes. A lot of Council members have discussed that you would like to connect with other neighborhoods with sidewalks. The subdivision located in Liberty Township across from Monroe Crossings is also owned by the same developer has a bike trail/sidewalks. There will be come connection from the Liberty Township development to the Monroe development, but it will not be a complete sidewalk or bike trail down on the Monroe side. In Monroe Crossings these will be upper-end homes. Mr. Routson referred to the Housing Study that recommended higher-end homes. There were just a few things that were discussed and not one of those things that will be a downgraded neighborhood, but there was some changes to the PUD.

Mayor Frentzel recognizes that there is a certain stigma of vinyl siding, but there is a certain thickness of it that would make it a higher-end.

Referencing a sidewalk within Monroe on Hankins Road, Mr. Hickman asked if that was part of the Planning and Zoning Code for subdivisions. He pointed out there is a walking path across the street, but it only goes so far. You have people that are private owners and I would think we would just put that sidewalk in and connect it on Hankins Road.

Mr. Brock advised there is a requirement within the Planning and Zoning Code that sidewalks are required. That was waived with the PUD amendment. Planning Commission didn't feel putting a sidewalk on Hankins, with the nature of Hankins, was safe and with the hiker/biker trail on the south side providing a connection to that and working with Liberty Township to extend their trail system as well we can coordinate between the two subdivisions.

In response to Mr. Hickman's questions, Mr. Brock advised that he is on the Liberty Township Trail Committee and part of the plan is to connect to Dudley Park, but there is no schedule. Mr. Brock further advised he has been on the Committee for about two years so he can be aware of the regional trail aspect as we were developing the Great Miami Trail and be a proponent for them to hook up into our system along the Great Miami River Trail.

Mr. Hickman asked what some of the ideas are for the Liberty Township Trails System as we don't have a trails system in Monroe. He noted that Mr. Brock moved out of Monroe to Liberty Township and is now on one of their committees and asked what the goal is for Monroe's trail system.

Mr. Brock hopes that through the Comprehensive Plan and future planning that we do develop further trails throughout the City as it is part of the existing Comprehensive Plan and it should be part of the upcoming Comprehensive Plan.

Mrs. McElfresh referenced the Housing Study that taxpayers paid for and the current process of completing a Comprehensive Plan to replace the one that is already on the books. Between those two big studies she recalled the total cost was approximately $140,000 for those two things to happen. The reason for these two things to happen were to define where our pockets were for housing in our City and how to move forward to make it more of an eclectic feel. One of the things that came out of the Housing Study was the need for larger homes on larger lots. Mrs. McElfresh did not understand why Planning Commission is not following our Code and why we use taxpayer money in the amount of $140,000 to pay for a study when it doesn't matter.

Mrs. Hale asked if a sidewalk was put in just north of Hankins Road if that would take away from the lot size.

Mr. Hickman added that we just put a sidewalk down Macready that took property away and we didn't even have to do that. It was just a request by a Council member.

Mr. Brock thought the nature of the question has to do with the interaction between Planning Commission and Council. Council approves the Comprehensive Plan and the Housing Plan with an intent to give that to Planning Commission. Planning Commission then takes that, interprets it, and uses it to act on the plans that are presented. There needs to be more work done with aligning the boards and commissions with the strategic vision of Council.

Mrs. McElfresh asked how that will help us now. Mr. Brock stated that you have a question for Planning Commission and their interpretation of your intent. They are your board. Staff provides comments and recommendations to them, but they will make that decision based on the ideas of Council.

Mrs. McElfresh commented there will be no sidewalks when our Code says there is to be sidewalks. She understood there is interior sidewalks, but down that main stretch road as all of that land is developed, whose responsibility is it to put those sidewalks in after the fact? That is not fair to taxpayers. If it is in our Code she didn't understand how sidewalks can be thrown to the curbside. We did not have vinyl on that list and now there is vinyl. These developers had this Code and knew what the expectations were and knew what the rules were before any plan was drawn up and here we are.

Mr. Brock stated that it would be incumbent on the Planning Commission to provide further information.

Mr. Funk pointed out in turn it is our job to request that information. They are our board and Mr. Brock doesn't tell them what to do. Mr. Brock and his administration create codes per our input and vision and we have boards and commissions that develop per those codes. There is variance in every municipality. That is why these boards and commissions are in place. It is our job, as we discussed during the retreat, to create that better relationship, that better chain of communication, that better working relationship with our boards and commissions so that these slips do not happen.

Mr. Hickman pointed out that Mr. Brock does offer his opinion and has a lot of control over this Planning Commission. Mr. Hickman informed Council he was told that Mr. Brock gives advice regarding trees and where they are planted. It is not necessarily that Mr. Brock does not offer any advice because, as Mr. Hickman was told by Planning Commission, that he does. Half of that road is still Lemon Township and Mr. Hickman asked how far does that road outside of the City limits go into their property.

Mr. Brock explained that it does not go into their property as it is from the middle of the road to the end of the road. Mr. Hickman asked about the status of annexing that portion of the roadway. Mr. Brock advised it was our intent to annex that while we were working on getting those signatures, the time elapsed to get those signatures because of land transfers and that sort of thing. Mr. Brock will ask the developer, and it was part of PUD agreement and the preliminary plat, that we annex that part of Hankins Road with that project.

Mr. Brock answered in the affirmative Mr. Hickman's question if, once this portion of Monroe Crossings is completed, if that is the end of this PUD. Mr. Hickman how many PUDs we have out there that are left that need to be built. Mr. Brock advised that Tall Oaks Subdivision is the only residential subdivision with available lots and confirmed that not all developments have a PUD. Mr. Hickman asked if a PUD comes to Council before it is approved and Mr. Chesar replied that if a new one came right now it would come to Council similar to a zoning amendment.

Old Business

Resolution No. 69-2020. A Resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into an agreement by and between the City of Monroe and Baker Tilly Municipal Advisors, LLC for professional services to complete a water rate study. (Second Reading)

Mr. Hickman expressed concern about paying $40,000 for a water study as we do a lot of studies that do not pan out.

Mayor Frentzel added that at the same time we have staff that has the information but does not necessarily have the time with all the other responsibilities to compile that data, so that is why we have to have some of these studies.

Mr. Funk moved to consider this the second reading of Resolution No. 69-2020 and have it read by title only; second by Mr. Routson. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The Clerk of Council read Resolution No. 69-2020 by title only.

Mr. Funk moved to adopt Resolution No. 69-2020; second by Mr. Routson. Roll call vote: four ayes; three nays (Callahan, Hickman, and McElfresh). Motion carried.

New Business

Emergency Resolution No. 70-2020. A Resolution approving a Then-and-Now Certificate in the amount of $19,751.68 to Butler County Water and Sewer and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Brock explained this is for the permit fee to Butler County Water and Sewer for the sewer connection at Bicentennial Commons Park. We were going through some engineering changes and once that was completed they set the permit amount.

Mr. Funk moved to suspend the rule requiring the reading of Emergency Resolution No. 70-2020 on two separate days, authorize its adoption on the first reading, and have it read by title only; seconded by Mr. Routson. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The Clerk of Council read Emergency Resolution No. 70-2020 by title only.

Mr. Funk moved to adopt Emergency Resolution No. 70-2020; seconded by Mrs. Hale. Roll call vote: seven ayes. Motion carried.

Emergency Resolution No. 71-2020. A Resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into a lease agreement by and between the City of Monroe and Enterprise Fleet Management and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Brock stated this is for the leased vehicles for the Police Department. We are turning in four unmarked and four marked and leasing three of each going forward. This is the last phase of the overall plan for the number of vehicles in this department.

Mr. Hickman asked if the Police Department is the only one leasing now. Mr. Brock replied the administrative vehicles in the Fire Department are being leased, some in the Public Works Department, and the vehicle used by the Code Enforcement Inspector. We were getting out of leasing of certain vehicles in the Public Works Department. Mr. Hickman asked why the City is getting rid of these police cruisers.

Chief Buchanan explained we currently still have four marked vehicles that the City owns. One has approximately 100,000 miles and the remaining have approximately 60,000 miles. One is a Sedan and the other Ford Explorers and are undersized for the equipment that we carry. With the lower miles and time frame they would be better trade in value toward the leasing of the new cruisers. Chief Buchanan confirmed Mayor Frentzel's understanding that we are downsizing the amount of vehicles in the police department.

Mr. Funk moved to suspend the rule requiring the reading of Emergency Resolution No. 71-2020 on two separate days, authorize its adoption on the first reading, and have it read by title only; seconded by Mrs. Hale. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The Clerk of Council read Emergency Resolution No. 71-2020 by title only.

Mr. Funk moved to adopt Emergency Resolution No. 71-2020; seconded by Mrs. Hale. Roll call vote: six ayes; one nay (Hickman). Motion carried.

Emergency Resolution No. 72-2020. A Resolution endorsing the filing of a Community Development Block Grant Funding Application for an Americans with Disabilities Act Program and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Brock reported that we are applying for $100,000 in Community Development Block Grant Funding through Butler County. This application is due on November 6th. We intend to replace the ADA ramps required by federal standards in the downtown area. We would have a match of approximately $10,000.

Mr. Funk noted that grant or no grant it is the right thing to do.

Mayor Frentzel understood this is an emergency because of the grant itself, but asked if this grant come in on a fast basis that we didn't know about or needed to get additional information and it couldn't have been presented earlier. Mr. Brock replied that we could have had it at the last Council meeting and we were putting together all the information and doing the estimates to see what kind of money we would be asking for.

Mr. Callahan asked what we are repairing with this money. Mr. Brock replied that we are repairing and replacing most of the curb ramps to ADA standards within the downtown area.

Mr. Funk moved to suspend the rule requiring the reading of Emergency Resolution No. 72-2020 on two separate days, authorize its adoption on the first reading, and have it read by title only; seconded by Mrs. McElfresh. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The Clerk of Council read Emergency Resolution No. 72-2020 by title only.

Mr. Funk moved to adopt Emergency Resolution No. 72-2020; seconded by Mr. Routson. Roll call vote: seven ayes. Motion carried.

Resolution No. 73-2020. A Resolution authorizing the City Manager to accept the proposal from Briggs Creative Services, LLC for professional right-of-way acquisition services for the Butler Warren and Mason Road Water Main Improvement Project.

Mr. Brock reported this is an agreement for land acquisition purposes for the needed right-of-way for the Mason Road waterline project. It will connect Gallaher Road to Gateway Boulevard. Along Mason Road, as part of the project, we want to straighten out the curve next to the driveway to the ranch. It will identify those parcels needed and negotiate the prices for those parcels.

Mr. Hickman asked about the status of the land swap agreement on Butler Warren Road and if this waterline go through that. Mr. Brock advised that the Law Director is finalizing this and the waterline will go through that property.

Mayor Frentzel asked about the land between Butler-Warren Road and Gateway Boulevard as he has seen projected plans for what the projected road will look like and if this waterline follow that projected road. Mr. Brock replied that the plans have been provided to the landowner and the hope is that the landowner will dedicate that right-of-way to the City in hopes there will not be a lot of costs associated with that. Mayor Frentzel asked about the straightening of the road near the ranch asked if some of it could go back to the ranch and Mr. Brock replied that it is possible.

Mr. Funk moved to consider this the first reading of Resolution No. 73-2020 and have it read by title only; seconded by Mr. Routson. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The Clerk of Council read Resolution No. 73-2020 by title only.

Mr. Funk moved to approve the first reading of Resolution No. 73-2020; seconded by Mrs. McElfresh. Roll call vote: seven ayes. Motion carried.

Emergency Ordinance No. 2020-32. An Ordinance appropriating the City's Coronavirus Relief Fund Payment to the City's COVID-19 response, directing the City Manager to establish the COVID-19 Small Business Assistance Program to be administered by the Monroe Area Community Improvement corporation and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Brock stated this is in response to the presentation at the last Council meeting creating the Small Business Assistance Program to be administered through the Community Improvement Corporation.

Mayor Frentzel noted that the dates were not included in the packet. Mr. Brock advised that Mrs. Patterson left those blank in the event there were any questions or changes from Council. Mrs. Patterson reported that it is anticipated that the program will kick off on November 16th to allow about two weeks for businesses to get their applications ready and we would take applications through December 4th. We will schedule a review meeting that following week. Mrs. Patterson further reported that a lighting round is anticipated that following week so that we could get all the money, hopefully, to all the businesses in case the first round does not meet the $50,000 threshold that we are looking for.

Mr. Funk moved to suspend the rule requiring the reading of Emergency Ordinance No. 2020-32 on two separate days, authorize its adoption on the first reading, and have it read by title only; seconded by Mr. Routson. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The Clerk of Council read Emergency Ordinance No. 2020-32 by title only.

Mr. Funk moved to adopt Emergency Ordinance No. 2020-32; seconded by Mr. Routson. Roll call vote: seven ayes. Motion carried.

Emergency Ordinance No. 2020-33. An Ordinance authorizing the trade-in of certain personal property no longer needed for municipal purposes and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Brock noted this authorizes the trade-in of the four police cruisers.

Mr. Funk moved to suspend the rule requiring the reading of Emergency Ordinance No. 2020-33 on two separate days, authorize its adoption on the first reading, and have it read by title only; seconded by Mrs. Hale. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The Clerk of Council read Emergency Ordinance No. 2020-33 by title only.

Mr. Funk moved to adopt Emergency Ordinance No. 2020-33; seconded by Mr. Routson. Roll call vote: six ayes; one nay (Hickman). Motion carried.

Consideration of Motion accepting the 2020 Rock Salt Bid through the SWOP4G Program from Compass Minerals America Inc. at $55.37 per ton.

Mr. Brock reported this is our annual bid through SWOP4G for rock salt and it is quite a bit of a reduction compared to last year.

Mr. Funk moved to accept the 2020 Rock Salt Bid through the SWOP4G Program from Compass Minerals America Inc. at $55.37 per ton; seconded by Mr. Routson. Voice vote. Motion carried.

Consideration of Motion rescheduling the regular meeting of Council on December 8, 2020, to December 15, 2020.

Mr. Brock requested that Council reschedule the meeting as we prepare for finalizing the budget and the temporary appropriations to allow additional time since the second meeting is typically cancelled in December.

Mr. Funk moved to reschedule the regular meeting of December 8, 2020 to December 15, 2020; seconded by Mr. Routson. Voice vote. Motion carried.

Administrative Reports

Mr. Brock advised it is that time of year that we begin preparing the temporary appropriations and we will present what our budget looks like in November. One of those items is the cost of living adjustment for non-union employees. The mid-west CPI is 1.3% and the union contracts are at 3%. He sought input from Council on this.

Mr. Funk asked if the Department Heads are still pairing back their budget in terms of the impact of COVID-19. Mr. Brock replied we are working toward utilizing that money and the income seems to be strong and up for the year. We are still working with that five percent reduction level and still have some uncertainty with net profit taxes next year.

Mr. Funk would rather pair back the budgets and put that on the departments and not on the employees. Mr. Funk is in favor of an increase of three percent.

Mr. Hickman asked if the employees have continued to receive their annual raises as well. Mr. Brock replied that we have started to begin giving the annual raises as well. Mr. Hickman stated that typically it is always good to discuss these things in executive session and isn't sure why we are discussing this in open session.

It was the consensus of Council to provide a three percent increase.

Mrs. McElfresh asked if there is an employee that is maxed out and reached whatever the top of their bracket is, do they get the three percent on top of that pay scale. Mr. Brock replied it is correct.

Mr. Brock referred to the vision statement and the report that the facilitator put together and requested any type of comment from Council before presenting for adoption.

Mrs. McElfresh commented that we are finalizing our Comprehensive Plan and would be interested in waiting to see what the steering committee comes up with and look at the two documents at that time.

Mr. Brock the vision statement for the Comprehensive Process was set earlier this year already and we can provide that information again formally.

Mr. Brock asked Council if the utility billing information that we are providing is relevant and if they have any questions to determine when we can begin shutting off water due to non-payment.

Mayor Frentzel likes the information being provided. It appears that the dollar amount is down and did not know if there was anything else that could help in the future.

Adjournment

Mr. Funk moved to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Routson. Voice vote. Motion carried.

The regular meeting of Council adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela S. Wasson, MMC
Clerk of Council