

Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Finance and Appropriations Committee Meeting

November 27, 2023

Members: Mary Nichols-Rhodes, Chair
Mike Brillhart
Adam Miller

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m. All members were present.

The minutes of the November 6, 2023 and November 13, 2023 Finance Committee meetings were approved as written.

Legislation Discussed

Temp. Ord. B-116

Discussion:

Temp. Ord. B-116

An ordinance establishing annual appropriations of money for the current expenses, capital expenditures, and other expenses of the City of Cuyahoga Falls for the Fiscal Year ending December 31, 2024, and declaring an emergency.

Ohio Revised Code §5705.38 requires local taxing authorities to pass an annual appropriations measure classified so as to set forth the amounts appropriated to each office, department and division of the taxing authority. Article VI, Section 6 of the City Charter requires the Mayor to submit an estimated budget for the coming fiscal year showing the requested allotments of the appropriations and estimated income for each office or department for the calendar year.

Neighborhood Excellence, Communications and Community Outreach - NECCO (Page 219)

Personal Services- \$2,836 increase. Salary and Wages decrease of \$852 related to replacement of Neighborhood Excellence & Downtown Administrator at a lower rate of pay than budgeted in 2023. This was offset by an increase in benefits is primarily related to Insurance - Medical/Dental +4.1%, Vision +4.1%, and contribution to the Workers' Compensation Fund (706) +1%. Additionally, a portion of the increase is from employee health plan selection being different than what was budgeted in the prior year.

Operations expenditures - \$19,235 increase. Increase mainly due to Miscellaneous Contractual Services (54005) \$25,000 for the possible development of a City smart phone app for residents and visitor to receive alerts, and happenings in the City.

Carrie Hummel Snyder, Director of NECCO, was present.

Ms. Hummel Snyder stated that there have been some changes in the way that they can communicate with residents, business owners and visitors in Cuyahoga Falls. The weekly newspaper that came to everyone's door became sporadic and has ended altogether. They have done some pivoting on how to best communicate with residents. One of the things they have looked

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at is an app. If it is approved on the budget, the Company that would like to purchase the app from has a connection to Cuyahoga Falls and have about 50 governmental agencies in the State of Ohio that they work with. They have produced over 700 apps for governments, sheriffs' departments, fire departments and cities, so they are well versed in government needs and how they need to communicate with the public and retain information. This is one more tool in their toolbox to be able to communicate effectively to residents through push notifications, emergency alerts and service delays.

Mr. Balthis asked if they envision this also being something that people could use to communicate with the City to report a pothole and other types of information they may want to share with the City.

Ms. Hummel Snyder stated that there is two-way communication available for reporting a pothole or streetlight outage. She does not know if those types of things would be possible for power outages, but the two-way communication and it being populated into an e-mail or text or whatever system they want to use is absolutely possible.

Mr. Stams stated that there were a few power outages in Ward 8, and Ms. Hummel Snyder mentioned the app would not be used for notifying the public of those events. Ms. Hummel Snyder stated that it would be used for NECCO to notify the public. Because they are a public power community, she does not know that will be a mechanism for residents to notify dispatch like how it happens now. They will be able to put a notification on the app that says, "power outage" and a return time, but not a back-and-forth text messaging with a resident about when their power is coming back on. Mr. Stams stated that a number of people have asked him for updates of when the restoration of power will occur. That would be greatly appreciated and a wonderful tool for that.

Mayor Walters asked Ms. Hummel Snyder to cover the website hits. Ms. Hummel Snyder stated that Triad designed and manages their website. She received an e-mail last Wednesday from Triad letting her know that they might have to up their plan for the City website. They are currently on the Performance Large Plan with the hosting provider, which allows up to 150,000 visitors a month. Apparently, the article that came out in that magazine blew up, because current trends show 6,446 visits in September, 1,378,843 visits in October and 4,192,449 visits so far in November. If that trends keeps up over the next couple of months, they may likely want to bump up their plan. They have had a lot going on with the Best Hometown being shared throughout the state and locally.

Community Development (Page 303)

Personal Services - \$111,895 increase. Due to the additional volume of planning and zoning issues in the City, we are requesting to create a new Assistant Planning Director at non-bargaining pay grade 29 to help manage the workload. In addition, we are requesting to change the Deputy Director of Community Development position to non-bargaining pay grade 32 to align with Deputy Service Director. Increase in benefits is related to another full-time position along with the increase to Insurance - Medical/Dental +4.1%, Vision +4.1% for current employees, and contribution to the Workers' Compensation Fund (706) +1%.

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Operations expenditures - (\$148,086) decrease. Decrease is related to one-time justifications in 2023 for Property/Building Maintenance and Repair (53021) \$23,000 for carpet replacement; Architectural/Engineering Services (54002) for two mini-master plans at \$40,000 each for South State Road, and Bailey Road corridor; and Miscellaneous Contractual Services (54005) for Rise together consulting. As noted previously, one-time justifications are removed from the budget in the following year.

The Community Development Department has a few Special Revenue Funds under their management including the Community and Economic Development Fund (Fund 209), Community Development Block Grant Fund (210), and Enterprise Zone/Community Reinvestment Area Fund (212). The nature of these funds is to account for specific revenues that are legally restricted to expenditure for particular purposes. These funds are budgeted at the Community Development Director's discretion based on restriction of use and available resources. The following fund descriptions are from excerpts from our City's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report:

Ms. Diana Colavecchio, Community Development Director; Ms. Mary Spaugy, Deputy Community Development Director; Ms. Peggy Szalay, CDBG Entitlement Administrator; Mr. Rob Kurtz, Planning Director; and Mr. Adam Paul, Senior Planner, were present on behalf of the Community Development Department.

Ms. Colavecchio stated that they are asking Council to approve an additional position for an Assistant Planning Director. Five years ago, there was not any judgment made that what was left behind was sufficient to meet the demands within capacity for demand in the City. After checking with neighbors that have less population, they have found that communities such as Green, population 27,000, has three planners; Barberton, population 25,000, has three planners and Hudson, population 23,000, has three planners. They have been going too long with what they have been doing in the city with two. It is an unbelievable task to keep up. They are just meeting deadlines. Five years ago, they did not have a Design Historic Review Board or a Public Art Board. Those are two additional boards that require more meetings, more applications and more permitting. They all feel that their planners are at capacity. Presuming this budget would be passed, the biggest job duty that this Senior Planner would have would be code enforcement on a proactive level, along with backing up the assistants and the Planning Director. Their budget did allow for an improved increase in classification for the Deputy Director to be pumped up a spot to match the same classification as the Deputy Service Directors, including the new one that would be added.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that it is amazing the work that has been done. She complemented the Rise Together Project because she got to be part of it and it is a long-term vision. Looking at economics in this area, people do not have workers, and they cannot build economics unless they have people to work.

Ms. Loza stated that it was mentioned that they would be doing zoning inspection and permit inspection. She asked if they would also be inspecting housing complaints.

Ms. Colavecchio answered that they will not. Housing enforcement is currently done by Mr. Steven Owen and Mr. Charles Nettle, and that code enforcement requires a different skill set and a

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different certification background. Mr. Owen will be retiring next year, and they will be searching for a replacement. So far, they feel that they are adequately able to handle the housing issues that come their way, and they do an excellent job.

Mr. Brillhart conveyed his strong support of adding the position of Assistant Planning Director.

Mr. Balthis stated that, as the only Council member who actually worked full time at the City, he can say that they do work as hard as it seems, and he definitely supports adding the additional position. He also appreciates the thought taken as to how they can best do that. He appreciates using neighboring communities in making sure they are in line. They are outperforming all the communities that were mentioned, and they are doing it with less staff and a much larger population. What is important is they cannot just be succeeding today; they need to continue to succeed and perform at this high level, and they cannot honestly and realistically continue to do that with short staff. He appreciates this investment and making sure that they can continue to make the progress they have been making and to have the next five years look as good as the last five or better. It is not lost on Council members that one of their most important responsibilities is being a good steward of the City's tax dollars, and there is no question they are getting an incredible return.

Community and Economic Development Fund - 209 (Page 309)

To account for monies received from the sale of City-owned properties in an urban renewal area.

Community Development Block Grant Fund - 210 (Page 311)

To account for monies received from the federal government through the Department of Housing and Urban Development as a direct entitlement community. The funding received is to directly benefit low and moderate income persons in the community. Projects funded include housing rehabilitation, economic development activities, infrastructure projects, planning and administrative costs that meet the programs national objectives. Projects are approved via an annual action plan. Fund also accounts for repayments from previous activities related to participation in the Summit County program as a subrecipient.

Enterprise Zone Community Reinvestment Fund - 212 (Page 317)

To account for fees collected from enterprises receiving a tax incentive through an enterprise zone agreement for the purpose of administering and monitoring the Enterprise Zone Agreement. The most notable changes to Community Development Special Revenue Funds are in the Community Development Block Grant Fund which is highlighted separately below.

Community Development Block Grant Fund (Page 311)

Revenues - (13,264) decrease. We are anticipating a slight reduction to the direct entitlement allocation from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Personal Services - \$6,945 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase from 7/1/2023 which is budgeted for the entire 2024 year, compared to half of year in 2023. Increase in benefits is primarily

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related to Insurance - Medical/Dental +4.1%, Vision +4.1%, and contribution to the Workers' Compensation Fund (706) +1%.

Operations expenditures - (\$20,253) decrease. Decrease in Training and Education (53015) \$3,400, and Travel (53016) \$3,800 as the department is planning on local training events in 2024; and Contractual Services Group (\$11,004). A portion of monies previously appropriated in Miscellaneous Contractual Services (54005), and HUD Housing Rehab Admin (54027) were reassigned to Economic Development (54020) for matching equipment / supply grants, façade grants, and sign grants. Spending of new C.D.B.G. entitlement funds is based on community needs, and is difficult to predict. Therefore, much of the budget is roughly estimated to match entitlement revenue projection.

Ms. Sara Kline, Parks and Recreation Superintendent, presented a PowerPoint presentation on the collaboration between the Community Development Department and Parks and Recreation Department with CDBG Funds.

Parks and Recreation (Page 319)

Personal Services - \$80,440 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase from 7/1/2023 which is budgeted for the entire 2024 year, compared to half of year in 2023, coupled with merit (10), and longevity (2) increases, and a small increase to Part Time (51005) \$25,985 for wage increases. Increase in benefits is primarily related to Insurance - Medical/Dental +4.1%, Vision +4.1%, and contribution to the Workers' Compensation Fund (706) +1%, offset by a slight decrease from employee health plan selection being different than what was budgeted in the prior year. General Fund portion of department personnel is fully staffed.

Operations expenditures - \$262,568 increase. General increases spread over many accounts, with the following notable items: Hardware/Lumber Supplies (52009) \$8,000 for increase in product pricing; Fuel (52051) \$12,000 for direct delivery of fuel for equipment which was previously in the Garage; Recreation Programming Supplies (52061) \$49,150 for additional programming resources, an example of which is Fishing/Outdoor programming Pickleball league, Kayaking instruction, and more large community events; Training and Education (53015) \$58,400 for CDL training/renewals and Trades training; Property/Building Maintenance and Repair (53021) \$10,000 for additional resources to maintain facilities; Computer System Support (54004) \$8,633 for WENS alert service and other cost increases; Miscellaneous Contractual Services (54005) \$21,775 for additional allocation for items such as DJ services, flicks (movies), community concerts, including Keyser barn concert series.

Recreation Levy Fund (Page 327, Five Year Capital Projection Page 328)

Revenues – (\$208,176) decrease. The largest contributing factor to this decrease is related to the difference in anticipated note issuance between 2023 and 2024. We had anticipated rolling over the notes outstanding at 12/31/2022 for Brookledge Clubhouse renovations in the amount of \$550,000, but we retired the notes outright. No debt issuance is planned for this fund in 2024. This was offset by an increase of Transfer In of \$341,824 relating to net collections of Municipal Income Tax (Rec Levy allocation 8%), for an estimated total allocation of \$2,520,238 to this fund.

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Operations expenditures - \$121,002 increase. Increase is attributable to many factors, but most notably Landscape Supplies (52012) \$45,000 for recurring downtown hanging baskets, and park-wide landscaping \$10,000, one-time 6th Street Rain Garden Project \$5,000, and other additional one-time landscaping projects \$30,000; Refuse Containers (52041) \$8,000 for additional contingency \$3,000, and trash cans for South Front Street development \$5,000; Athletic Supplies (52060) \$7,500 for ball field improvement supplies.

Capital outlay - The Five-year Capital Plan 2024-2028 for this fund is on page 327 and will be discussed in detail at the budget hearing. Capital Projects change from year to year and are generally not comparable. There is a decrease of \$374,500 in this group. Some notable items planned for 2024 are Park Restroom improvements \$220,500; Natatorium Diamond Brite Leisure Pool, and Therapy Pool for \$200,000 and 135,000, respectively; and Water Works Diamond Brite \$150,000.

Debt service - \$574,750 decrease. This decrease is related to the Notes outstanding at 12/31/2022 for Brookledge Clubhouse renovations, which were retired in 2023. Therefore, there is no expense for this in 2024.

Leisure Time Fund (Page 333, Five Year Capital Projection Page 339)

Revenues - \$584,983 increase, which is mainly attributable to more projected charges for services and facility rental for Natatorium \$363,500, Water Works \$850, Brookledge \$140,000, and Downview \$13,500. Increase in charges for services is due to a general increase in activity, and a change in fee structure at the Natatorium.

Personal Services - \$131,378 overall increase. A breakdown of increase by department are as follows: Natatorium \$70,941, Water Works \$8,818, Brookledge \$48,006, and Downview \$3,613. Cost of living (COLA) increase from 7/1/2023 which is budgeted for the entire 2024 year, compared to half of year in 2023, coupled with merit (2), and longevity (2) increases for Natatorium employees, and increases to Part Time (51005) wages for the Natatorium \$44,000, Brookledge \$30,800, Downview \$2,350, mostly to account for wage increases. Increase in benefits is primarily related to Insurance - Medical/Dental +4.1%, Vision +4.1%, and contribution to the Workers' Compensation Fund (706) +1%. Leisure Time Fund portion of department personnel had two open positions in the Natatorium at the time of budget preparation: Facility Director, which has since been filled by promotion, and a full-time Laborer.

Operations expenditures - \$220,007 overall increase. A breakdown of increase by department are as follows: Natatorium \$106,041, Water Works \$25,040, Brookledge \$80,167, and Downview \$8,759. Increases are mostly attributable to the following: Natatorium - Refunds and Reimbursements (54301) \$60,509 for funding of the departments share of the future 27th pay in 2026 \$26,609, and a planned reimbursement of \$24,000 to Cuyahoga Falls City School District for diving board replacement, and Internal Services - Indirect Information Services (54625) \$36,897 for additional costs; Water Works - Banking Fees (53004) \$4,543 for increased volume of transactions, Merchandise for Resale (53027) \$5,000 for additional concession items for resale at the snack bar, and Refunds and Reimbursements (54301) \$10,540 mostly associated repayment of interfund balances; Brookledge - Landscaping Supplies (52010) \$10,000 for increases in the cost

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of turf applications, Banking Fees (53004) \$12,165 for increased volume of transactions, and Refunds and Reimbursements (54301) \$15,286 mostly associated repayment of interfund balances; Downview - Refunds and Reimbursements (54301) \$20,691 mostly associated repayment of interfund.

Capital outlay - The Five-year Capital Plan 2024-2028 for this fund is on page 339 and will be discussed in detail at the budget hearing. Capital Projects change from year to year and are generally not comparable, however, with that being stated there is an increase of \$26,000 for 2024. Some notable items planned for 2024 are Natatorium Kid Castle renovation \$30,000, Brookledge large area mower \$130,000, and Downview range ball picker machine \$25,000 2024.

Ms. Sara Kline, Parks and Recreation Superintendent, Mr. Mike Fallis, Assistant Parks and Recreation Superintendent, and Park Board member Mr. John Falasco were present on behalf of the Parks and Recreation Department.

Ms. Kline stated that they are preparing a large-scale event for the solar eclipse and partnering with Blossom Music Center and other entities. They will be working with NECCO for summer events in 2024, and they will continue to have a variety of community events put on through their department, including a Fourth of July event. Given the number of people that attended the Tree Lighting, with the new way that they have come to execute that, she believes that they will continue this model and, next year, they will see a Christmas tree Santa visit similar to what they had this year with some improvements. They are not adding new staff.

Ms. Kline stated that, on the Leisure Time side, they had Ms. Cathy Burt promoted to the Director. They also will be looking for a new aquatic person for Waterworks and the water facility at the Natatorium.

Ms. Loza thanked them for all that they do for the community and the kids. She stated that she wanted to address trash cans, because people were asking about them during the public hearing. Ms. Kline stated that they do plan to use 2024 funds to purchase a number of additional trash cans downtown. They are currently in every place they would like them to be, so they are going to be placing more on Riverfront Parkway, as well as perhaps some on Second Street to address the DORA and increased usage. The maintenance staff is not experiencing a lot of DORA cups, but just general use. There is encouragement on the business side to help them manage their DORA cups. They are going to buy 25 to 30 trash cans to spread downtown. Additionally, with big community events, they want to invest in portable ones. They need to purchase more of those that would not stay out all the time, but that they can put out when needed.

Ms. Loza thanked them for the updates to the restrooms at Indian Mountain Park and asked if consideration has been given to adult changing tables for folks who need assistance getting changed for the pool or anything like that.

Ms. Kline stated that they have not considered adult changing tables. The new restrooms will meet complete ADA requirements, which means they can accommodate two people if they need assistance or a full-power wheelchair change; not necessarily a table, because of structural concerns and weight limitations, but making sure there is enough space. She stated that, as

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someone who has to help her daughter do things like that, extra room is needed when helping another adult with personal care needs. All of the new restrooms will accommodate that in full.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked how many of those trash cans would be recycle cans. Ms. Kline stated that their plan is to pair at least half with a recycle unit next to it. There are already some where there are two together and some single. They are not going to invest in as many recycle cans as the straight trash cans, because people do not always recycle and there are things that cannot be recycled that can be put in the trash.

Garage Fund (Page 287)

Revenues - \$147,439 increase. This increase is mostly related to Internal Service Charges (45401) to other City departments. In governmental accounting, internal service Funds account for the financing of goods or services provided by one department of the City to other departments on a cost reimbursement basis. Therefore, since expenses of the fund are increasing, internal cost reimbursement from other departments go up accordingly.

Personal Services - \$47,289 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase from 7/1/2023 which is budgeted for the entire 2024 year, compared to half of year in 2023, coupled with merit (3), and longevity (3) increases. Increase in benefits is primarily related to Insurance - Medical/Dental +4.1%, Vision +4.1%, and contribution to the Workers' Compensation Fund (706) +1%. Additionally, a portion of the increase is from employee health plan selection being different than what was budgeted in the prior year.

Operations expenditures - \$151,585 increase, which is mostly due to general inflationary increases spread over a few accounts, such as Fuel (52051) +\$40,000, and Vehicle Parts (52052) +\$9,500, Vehicle Maintenance and Repair (53029) \$30,000.

Mr. John Campbell, Superintendent of Motor Vehicles, was present on behalf of the Garage Department.

The meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.