

FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES
of September 20, 2021

In Attendance: **Vermilion City Council:** *Steve Herron, President of Council; Monica Stark, Council at Large; Emily Skahen, Ward One; Frank Loucka, Ward Two; Steve Holovacs, Ward Three; Barb Brady, Ward Four; Brian Holmes, Ward Five*

Administration: *Jim Forthofer, Mayor; Chris Howard, City Engineer; Tony Valerius, Service Director*

Call to Order: Barb Brady, Chairwoman, RESOLVED THAT this Finance Committee comprised of the committee of the whole does now come to order.

TOPIC ONE: American Rescue Plan (Projects/Costs)

B. Brady said she put this on the agenda because she knows the administration received money and wanted to make sure council stayed in the loop as far as what the administration was thinking as far as projects, but it sounds like it is spent. Mayor Forthofer said the first installment is \$1,088,000 and on July 12, Council received from the Finance Director a list of the allocations for ARP, and they remain the same and they total the exact amount they are supposed to get. B. Brady confirmed they are paying the \$499,000 for the wastewater treatment plant improvements. Mayor Forthofer said yes.

TOPIC TWO:Part-Time Property Maintenance Inspector

S. Holovacs explained this issue came up last week by Tony Valerius when he advised council they hired a new property maintenance inspector because Ron Sislowski retired. He said he directed the clerk to send an email and when Ron left he left at \$14.25, and he knew Ron worked roughly three days a week at 12 hours a week. He said he knows the new guy's name is Frank and is making \$20.00 an hour. He asked how many hours he is working. T. Valerius said currently 20 – 25 hours a week.

B. Brady said Ron was only working in the summer though – he was not working 12 months. T. Valerius said this was correct and noted these hours are flexible. B. Brady said flexible as are they only doing so many hours per year. T. Valerius said there is a limit that Amy allows for a part-time employee. B. Brady said yes for a part-time employee, but Ron was not anywhere near this because he was only working three or four months. T. Valerius said Ron was working 12 hours a week and they probably should have had him working more, but he couldn't work more, so adding these extra hours to the property maintenance is going to help clean up more things in the city.

M. Stark said if Ron was making \$14.25 per hour are they doing the same type of work that they hired someone now for \$20.00 per hour. Mayor Forthofer said yes it

is the same work, but the only perspective he can give is that they pay lifeguards \$20.00 per hour and this person is pretty well qualified and he is getting a Building Inspector's certification. He said rates have gone up and he is not working all year long, but \$20.00 per hour for this type of work is probably fair, in fact he ran comparable rates. M. Stark thought they were paying lifeguards \$12.00 per hour, but the mayor said they were paying them \$20.00. Mayor Forthofer said lifeguards at Cedar Point are paid \$20.00 an hour. S. Holovacs said everybody at Cedar Point gets paid \$20.00.

S. Holovacs said he was of the understanding that the replacement for Ron was doing the same thing (property maintenance) and Mayor you're bringing up something about being a building inspector. Mayor Forthofer said this is just the type of qualifications he has – he knows his job very well. S. Holovacs said he understands this and is not saying that, but did they hire something more – are they looking for full-time employee down the road? Mayor Forthofer said this is a one for one replacement for Mr. Sislowski period – not to say – they will be coming to council with an overall plan for the involvement of the building department. S. Holovacs said, "January 1". Mayor Forthofer said for tonight all they are doing is asking for a one for one replacement for Mr. Sislowski – that's it.

S. Holovacs asked if this job was posted or was this a friend or family member hired. Mayor Forthofer said he was not sure how they found him. T. Valerius said this was an area contractor that Bill DiFucci knew. S. Holovacs asked, "For 20 years?" T. Valerius said he did not know. S. Holovacs said yes it was – this was what he was told, and this is why he is asking – it was not posted, and you guys got a friend to take the position – yes or no? Mayor Forthofer said it was not his friend. T. Valerius said he also did research on an outside contractor to come in to sub it out and there was also another person he talked to that was interested in the job, but he did not supply a resume. S. Holovacs asked – was it posted? T. Valerius said it was not posted. S. Holovacs said okay this is all he asked, or was it a friend hired, it was friend of the building inspector for 20 years. T. Valerius said he did not know. S. Holovacs said he did, because he was told this, but he wanted Tony to tell him this because he and Bill are close, and he just wanted an answer. T. Valerius said he knew that Bill knows this guy. S. Holovacs said and they worked together right? T. Valerius said he thinks they worked together years ago. S. Holovacs said yep, okay, that is all he wanted to know.

B. Brady said they got a 50 percent increase in salary, and they are paying two times as many months that they paid Ron, so she would think this is something they should look at as far as costs. Mayor Forthofer said he is hit regularly about the lack of inspections on properties – uneven sidewalks, the bad porches. He is getting this all the time. B. Brady said she is not arguing this fact and is not saying they did or did not need him, but she thinks the money needs to come back to council. Mayor Forthofer said she mentioned they are working long or something like that – they have a lot more work to do. B. Brady said Ron was only here in the summertime. Mayor Forthofer said he was only here in the summertime and his hours were somewhat abbreviated for health reasons too. B. Brady said she is only saying the costs of this person is a lot higher and they have not approved anymore

money for the building department. It should come back here – not saying they would not approve it, but it should come back to council.

S. Hlovacs said when Ron was hired back in the 2000s the previous administration came to council and asked them for approval based on \$10.00 an hour, 20 hours a week, not to exceed \$20,000 hypothetically, and through the years he made more money, but all Council was told was Ron was leaving and here is the new guy, and they had asked what the cost was per hour – not being told anything. This is one of council's things – the finances, and you guys went ahead and over exceeded what you paid and at least you could have told council.

B. Holmes said he would hope that in whatever they decide that he will be a lot busier than Ron. Mayor Forthofer said he is getting a lot of feedback from people that he has been visiting. B. Brady said in going back to the Mayor's other comment he said the prosecutor is overwhelmed, so if this Frank covers more complaints where will it go – will it just pile up on the prosecutor's desk – that doesn't do them any good. T. Valerius said the prosecutor's office over the past three months has been doing a lot better. Mayor Forthofer said they cannot be afraid to make the citations where they apply.

S. Herron said he totally understands the frustration that council feels because he has a little bit, but he does not think it is anything purposeful by the administration because in all fairness the administration – if they are not complaining about the costs they are complaining about how little is being done as far as the inspections. You guys have a ton of work, and they cannot have it both ways. If they want an aggressive building inspector they have to pay one, and rates are going up and he cannot believe what people are being paid. They have to pay people and if they are going to sit here and talk about the people in this community that unfortunately are choosing not to follow the law, then they are going to complain about paying to enforce it. The communication should be better, but he is all for paying for somebody to get busy and get it done, either that or as Mr. Werley said, "Don't make a law". They can't just say, "Hey administration go out and do all these aggressive things – hey administration don't pay". He said he sees both sides to this.

B. Brady asked council if they were okay in leaving things as the administration has done. S. Hlovacs said it is what it is. B. Brady said she just wants to make sure there is enough money in the building department.

After no further discussion came before the committee, B. Brady adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting: October 18, 2021 – 7:00 p.m. @ Vermilion Municipal Complex, 687 Decatur Street, Vermilion, Ohio.

Transcribed by Gwen Fisher Certified Municipal Clerk