

SPECIAL SESSION

November 9, 2023

The Council of the City of Chardon met in Special Session Thursday, November 9, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. in Council Chambers of the Chardon Municipal Center.

Christopher Grau, Mayor & President of Council presiding.

The meeting opened with the pledge of allegiance and roll call.

Members of Council present: Andrew Blackley, Deborah Chuha, Christopher Grau, David Lelko, Kyle Martin, Heather Means, Daniel Meleski.

Members of Council absent: none.

Others Present: City Manager Randy Sharpe, Finance Director Mark Iacofano, Clerk of Council Amy Day, Law Director Benjamin Chojnacki, Police Chief Scott Niehus, City Engineer Doug Courtney, Community Development Administrator Steve Yaney, Public Service Director Paul Hornyak, Parks and Recreation Director Adam Rogers, Municipal Court Clerk Vicki Dailey, Peter Byrnes, Angela Nagal, Steve Turpin, Ken Ovarik, Paul Ovarik, Allison Wilson, Bill Hess, Anastasia Nicholas, Addison Hofstetter, Gina Hofstetter, Jim Dustin, Angela Hansen, Tom Hummel.

Regarding pre-budget 2024 topics, Mr. Sharpe provided an overview of the budget timeline which began in September by meeting with department heads. Mr. Sharpe said the budget will be updated with actual 2023 numbers in January, 2024 and the budget book will be prepared for Council's approval which needs to take place by March 31, 2024.

Mr. Sharpe began reviewing economic projections and possible changes for 2024 including an anticipated 5% wage increase for employees, a 1.3% health insurance increase, and water/sewer rate increases that were authorized by Council in 2021.

Mr. Sharpe reviewed goals and priorities, one of which is to retain the same level of service, noting that the City needs to consider the effects that community growth will have on the level of service, and make necessary adjustments. An additional goal is to continue to be a pedestrian-friendly City through the programs that are in place. Mr. Sharpe added that the City will continue with the salary compensation program to be competitive in order to attract, reward and retain employees.

Municipal Court Clerk, Victoria Dailey, noted a few program updates for the Municipal Court for 2024 that include investigating alternative credit card processing vendors to lower processing fees, and using Fed-Ex as a cost-saving measure for delivery of court summons. Potential future projects include painting and flooring replacement within areas the court.

Park and Recreation Director, Adam Rogers, reviewed programs that were successful and unsuccessful, and potential new programs. Mr. Rogers shared that he plans to recruit staff earlier in the season and offer new programming to increase public participation.

Mr. Meleski asked if the reimbursement for lifeguard recertification was successful.

Mr. Rogers stated that the reimbursement was beneficial as staff shortages in 2023 were not an issue.

Mr. Rogers reviewed the scope of the City-wide camera project and the benefit it provides.

Mr. Blackley asked what recreational programs were hindered by facility needs.

Mr. Rogers stated that trying to find gym space has been a challenge for many years.

Community Development Administrator, Steve Yaney, said the budget for the Planning and Zoning Department remains similar to years past. His department continues with code enforcement, property maintenance code and grass cuttings. He shared that the number of properties with code enforcement has decreased, but the amount of time to deal with them has increased.

Mr. Yaney said that the Planning and Zoning Code revisions will be ready for review by Planning Commission in the coming months. Mr. Yaney stated that he is continuing to work with the Law Director to address short-term rentals. He added that due to the recent increase in development, there may be a future need to consider making the part-time project coordinator position a full-time one.

Mr. Blackley asked if the position would need to be full-time, rather than adding an additional part-time staff member since the recent increase in development will not continue at its current pace indefinitely.

Mr. Yaney stated that he does not see a time when there would not be activity going on, noting that the position could evolve into more of a planning/code enforcement position.

Police Chief, Scott Niehus, reported on the status of programs and training in the Police Department, noting that body cameras have been installed, and he reviewed the training that is planned for the year. He reviewed the tools and equipment planned for purchase in 2024 including vests and radio replacements, and cell phones in vehicles. In addition, CCTV surveillance system upgrades are planned and investigation will be done on an emergency mass notification system.

Mr. Lelko asked if the City can override the cable channels.

Chief Niehus stated that the City does not have the capability, but the County does.

Mr. Lelko asked the process for contacting the City's call-out person for streets or water/sewer.

Chief Niehus stated that the sheriff's office should be contacted.

Discussion occurred regarding training staff regarding the legalization of marijuana.

Law Director, Benjamin Chojnacki, said the Law Department remains generally unchanged for 2024. Two items to note include that an assistant police prosecutor resigned, leaving two remaining, and the outstanding question of will Ohio law change regarding prosecution responsibilities for the municipal court.

Finance Director, Mr. Iacofano reported on the status of ongoing programs. He explained that his department is continuing to look at utility software to deliver a better customer experience for utility customers. He noted that a change for 2024 is that an independent audit firm will be performing the City’s annual audit rather than the State Auditor.

Public Service Director, Paul Hornyak, reviewed the status of ongoing programs in the Public Service Department. Mr. Hornyak said the department was successful in creating an in-house certified CDL training program which provides significant cost savings.

Mr. Hornyak shared that new for the 2024 budget, the lands and buildings division is requesting a new maintenance position to assist in the department workload. In addition, the Public Service Department is requesting funding to conduct a preliminary engineering review of the storm water system at Chardon Park Estates. Also proposed for 2024 are additional 40-gallon trash cans for the Square and steps and railings for the first-floor tenants at Old Village Hall.

Mr. Sharpe further explained the rationale behind the request for a full-time maintenance worker in the Lands and buildings Division including the difficulty in hiring part-time staff and the increased labor demands resulting from more events and aging structures. In addition, a full-time patrolman is being requested in the Police Department.

Mr. Sharpe reviewed the status of ongoing programs including funding of retail strategies, G-TV, events on the Square and employee retention and recognition programs. He also reviewed funding for various information technology initiatives.

Mr. Meleski asked if there is government consortium or state bid pricing for the purchase of the software.

Mr. Sharpe stated that the City plans to take advantage of the government tier rate.

ADJOURN

Mr. Meleski moved and Mrs. Chuha seconded to adjourn. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

Attest:

CHRISTOPHER GRAU, Mayor
President of Council

AMY DAY
Clerk of Council