SPECIAL SESSION

March 7, 2024

The Council of the City of Chardon met in Special Session on Thursday, March 7, 2024 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 Randal Sharpe, Law Director Benjamin Chojnacki, Finance Director Mark Iacofano, Clerk of Council Amy Day, Public Service Director Paul Hornyak, Police Chief Scott Niehus, Park and Recreation Director Adam Rogers, Community Development Administrator Steven Yaney, Deputy HR/Finance Director Heidi Delaney, Municipal Court Judge Terri Stupica, Clerk of Courts Vicki Dailey, Charles Boros, Amy Patterson, Richard Depenbrock, Allen Herner, Judy Thrasher, Bill Jackson, David Jevnikar.

Regarding the FY 2024 Annual Budget, City Manager, Randy Sharpe, provided an overview of the budget document which was modified from years past due to the implementation of OpenGov software. He explained that the online version of the budget is interactive and provides more details than the printed version. He noted that the department narratives, which detail additional and unusual expenditures, are not included in the 2024 budget, but will be available in future budgets.

Finance Director, Mark Iacofano, began reviewing the budget document including the budgeted positions for personnel, General Fund transfers, and projected ending balances for each of the funds, noting that carryover balances are used to cover the shortfall in the years where expenditures exceeded revenue.

Mr. Blackley requested that fund names be included in future budgets in addition to the fund numbers.

Mr. Iacofano reviewed the revenue estimates for 2024 compared to actual revenue from the last 4 years for all funds.

Mr. Iacofano reviewed income tax revenue over the last 5 years broken down between withholding, individual, and net profit taxes. He explained that the City’s income tax was 1.13% higher in 2023 than 2022, and 2024 income tax was budgeted conservatively at a 3.5% increase over what was budgeted in 2023. Income taxes are the major source of General Fund revenue and are projected to account for 71% of General Fund revenue in 2024.

Deputy HR/Finance Director, Heidi Delaney, reviewed the anticipated 2024 fund expenditures by function and type compared to the prior 4 years, noting that the 2024 figures are projected higher than the actual because the Finance Department budgets for the worst-case scenario.

Mrs. Delaney reviewed notable items in the personnel and operating expenditures

Mr. Iacofano reviewed capital projects for 2024 totaling $8.5 million. He highlighted a few major projects and noted that a few changes have been made to the original Capital Improvement Plan.

Mr. Iacofano reviewed the budgeted 2024 revenues and expenditures as compared to prior years.

Municipal Court Judge, Terri Stupica, and Clerk, Victoria Dailey, spoke to review the court’s proposed revenue and expenditures for 2024.

Ms. Dailey reviewed their major projects for 2024 which include technology upgrades and audio/video enhancements.

Judge Stupica reported that the court has experienced a decline in cases, which they are investigating.

Judge Stupica reported that the County Prosecutor’s office will be taking over the Municipal Court cases in the unincorporated areas of the County.

Judge Stupica reported that the Victim Advocate position will be under the umbrella of the Municipal Court, and noted that they will be requesting the current part-time employee position be changed to full-time to assist with the increase in duties.

Mayor Grau asked why additional staff is needed if the caseloads decreased in 2023 from 2022.

Judge Stupica stated that the court is seeing more violent crimes that involve the Victim Advocates.

Mr. Lelko asked if the second full-time position is in the budget.

Judge Stupica stated that the position is not in the budget, but the court will be requesting the position be filled in 2024.

Police Chief, Scott Niehus, reviewed the notable expenditures in the Police Department 2024 budget including vests, ammunition, mobile computers, radios, one vehicle replacement, parking enforcement solution, and personnel costs including the addition of one full-time officer.

Ms. Means inquired about the details of the parking enforcement program.

Chief Niehus stated that the parking enforcement program is hoped to be implemented in the first half of 2024 at a cost of approximately $25,000. He added that police officers, at least initially, will provide the parking enforcement.

Mr. Blackley stated that the budget book as prepared is a high-level look at 2024 expenditures and does not include the details being referenced by department heads.

Mr. Lelko stated that he is disappointed with the lack of detail in the budget book. He stated that the importance is the quality of the product and not the ease of putting it together.

Ms. Delaney stated that the 2024 budget does not contain the level of detail that future years will, because the software was implemented after the budget process began.

Mr. Sharpe reviewed the 2024 Fire and EMS budget.

Public Service Director, Paul Hornyak, reviewed the notable expenditures in the water & sewer operating, street maintenance, cemetery, urban forestry and lands and buildings 2024 budgets. He explained that a significant item to mention is that the State Route Resurfacing Project which was budgeted for 2024 will not begin until 2025.

Community Development Administrator, Steve Yaney, reviewed notable expenditures in the Planning and Zoning Department budget for 2024.

Recreation Director, Adam Rogers, reviewed the notable expenditures in the Park and Recreation Department budget for 2024.

Mr. Sharpe reviewed the notable expenditures in the 2024 Manager’s budget.

Mr. Sharpe reviewed the notable expenditures in the 2024 Legislative budget.

Mr. Sharpe reviewed the notable expenditures in the 2024 General Administration budget, with a significant item being the IT services expenditure, which is subject to change due to the City’s change in their managed provider, ISSquared.

Ms. Delaney reviewed the notable expenditures in the 2024 budget for the Finance Department and Water and Sewer Billing.

Discussion occurred regarding options for customers to view and pay their water and sewer bills.

Law Director, Benjamin Chojnacki, reviewed the notable expenditures in the Legal Department budget for 2024, noting that the figures are subject to change because of the recent action by the governor to transfer prosecutory responsibilities from the unincorporated areas of the County to the County prosecutor. It is anticipated that the individuals who do the police prosecution for the City will become employees of the County Prosecutor.

Mr. Blackley asked about the increase in the budgeted amount for attorneys and judges.

Mr. Chojnacki stated that the funds were budgeted in the event that the City finds itself in some costly litigation.

Mr. Sharpe concluded the budget presentation by thanking the Finance Department and department heads for their work preparing the budget, and thanked Council for their support and trust.

Mrs. Chuha requested that staff provide Council with a copy of the information they reviewed during their presentation.

ORDINANCE NO. 3265
AN ORDINANCE TO MAKE ANNUAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR CURRENT EXPENSES AND OTHER EXPENDITURES OF THE CITY OF CHARDON, STATE OF OHIO DURING THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2024 AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY was read for the first time by title only.

Mr. Meleski moved and Mrs. Chuha seconded the rules be suspended and the Ordinance be read for the second and third time by title only. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance No. 3265 was then read for the second and third time by title only.

Mr. Meleski moved and Mrs. Chuha seconded for the adoption of Ordinance No. 3265.

Mr. Iacofano requested Council's passage of the appropriation ordinance in the amount of $29,625,811.00 for fiscal year ending December 31, 2024.

Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

Regarding amendment to the classification and pay plan, Mr. Sharpe stated that the plan reflects a 3.5% wage increase for non-bargaining employees that was included in the 2024 budget. In addition, it reflects changes to remove positions that are no longer budgeted.

Mrs. Chuha moved and Mr. Martin seconded to approve the classification and pay plan as presented by the City Manager. Upon roll call vote the motion passed unanimously.

GENERAL PUBLIC

Mr. Grau requested comments be kept to 3 minutes.

Richard Depenbrock, 409 E. Barrington, requested Council not terminate their contract with G-TV as he has heard comments from the general public about how much they appreciate the sports programming it provides.

Charles Boros, 120 Goodrich Ct., asked Council to renew the G-TV contract because he feels it provides a valuable service for the City of Chardon residents. He added that he and his neighbors would appreciate anything Council can do to remediate the property at 114 Huntington Street that is a nuisance.

Mayor Grau stated that the City is pursuing legal channels regarding the property on Huntington Street.

Terri Hagner, Hambden resident, requested Council maintain its contract with G-TV, noting that it would be devastating, especially to senior citizens if it were to be terminated.

Allen Herner, 409 Chardon Ave., requested Council keep G-TV fully funded through the service provider fees it receives.

John Maduke, township resident, stated that G-TV is a tremendous asset to the community that has become a part of people's lives.

Bill Hofstetter, Chardon Township resident, stated that G-TV is an intangible asset that is impossible to quantify.

Bill Jackson, 142 North Street, stated that G-TV adds value to the community.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – none.

Regarding the termination of the G-TV contract, Ms. Means stated that 18 people have reached out to the City to request the contract with G-TV be extended. She added that there are 952 cable subscribers in the City.

Mr. Sharpe reviewed a list of alternative uses for the cable franchise fee which Council requested he prepare.

Mr. Blackley asked if the agenda and meeting management solution would need to be purchased if G-TV was not funded by the City.

Mr. Sharpe stated that it would not need to be purchased, but the City's Council meetings have always been broadcast.

Mr. Lelko inquired about the City's current process for broadcasting Council meetings.

Mrs. Day explained how the meetings are recorded and broadcast on YouTube after they are edited.

Mr. Meleski stated that the feedback Council received is fairly respectable in a short amount of time. He added that there is a greater footprint of people who consider themselves to be part of the City besides the corporate boundaries. He finds value in the programming G-TV provides that goes beyond what can be measured and would like to see it continue, adding that tax money is not used to fund it.

Dave Jevnikar, representing G-TV, reviewed the analytics of G-TVs website, and asked Council to consider the wide reach it has in addition to the cable channel.

Mr. Martin stated that every person he has asked saw G-TV as an asset and wanted to see its programming continue.

Mr. Lelko stated that G-TV should examine the way they are funded, as some of the programming could pay for their event to be broadcast. He added that he would like to give Mr. Jevnikar time to look at how G-TV is funded and does not wish to cancel the contract at the present time.

Mr. Lelko moved and Ms. Means seconded to extend the City's contract with G-TV through December 31, 2024 to allow G-TV time to look at alternate funding sources.

Mr. Meleski stated that he would like to see the contract extend 12-months to give G-TV time to look at alternate funding sources.

Mr. Lelko and Ms. Means withdrew their motion and second.

Mr. Lelko moved and Ms. Means seconded to authorize the City Manager to execute a first amendment to the current agreement with G-TV, perpetuating all terms as they currently exist through December 31, 2025.

Results of the roll call vote:

Blackley: Yes
Chuha: Yes
Grau: Abstain
Lelko: Yes
Martin: Yes
Means: Yes

Meleski: Yes

Motion passed.

Mr. Jevnikar asked for clarification on the fees to be paid to G-TV.

Mr. Sharpe explained that the City would pay G-TV the franchise fees collected less $16,000.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Lelko reported on Notre Dame students bowling achievements at State.

ADJOURN

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

CHRISTOPHER GRAU, Mayor
President of Council

Attest:

AMY DAY
Clerk of Council