

**MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF AVON, OHIO HELD MONDAY, JUNE 8, 2020
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING
AT 7:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Council Members: 1st Ward – Bob Butkowski; Council-at-Large – Brian Fischer; Council-at-Large - Tammy Holtzmeier; 2nd Ward - Dennis McBride; 3rd Ward - Tony Moore; 4th Ward - Scott Radcliffe; Council-at-Large - Craig Witherspoon; Mayor - Bryan Jensen; City Engineer - Ryan Cummins; Service Director - Mike Farmer; Planning and Economic Development Coordinator - Pam Fechter; Law Director - John Gasior; Finance Director – William Logan; Safety Director – Duane Streator; Clerk of Council - Barbara Brooks

1. [ORDINANCE NO. 54-20](#) – ESTABLISHING A TAX BUDGET FOR THE CURRENT EXPENDITURES OF THE CITY OF AVON, LORAIN COUNTY, OHIO, FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2021 Mr. Logan

Mr. Logan advised this is required by the State of Ohio and the Budget Commission of Lorain County, which is a preliminary budget and is due in the middle of July. He is asking for Council to consider it over the next couple of weeks with the first reading tonight at the Regular Meeting following this Work Session. Mr. Logan stated he sent Council quite a bit of information the other day regarding the 2021 budget and it will be fine-tuned in the fall. He said they feel this is as realistic as they can expect right now and as they go through this economic downturn. Mr. Logan advised this year, the forecast versus the original budget for total revenues is down about 6%. He said next year's budget as it stands right now for revenues, they would be up about 3% from this year's forecast. Mr. Logan felt they would see some of the economy come back, but they are not sure where income tax will end up for this year. He stated income tax is the biggest factor in all of this as it is the City's largest source of revenue, but they were not going to have a very good year with motel tax and a few other revenue sources like that. Mr. Logan advised as far as expenses for 2021, they have tried to keep things to a minimum and while they did not go through and reduce a lot of line items in the preliminary budget, they also did not add a bunch of projects yet as those can be fine-tuned as they get into the fall. He felt by the fall they would know a lot better what the revenues are going to look like. Mr. Logan advised he would be happy to answer any questions Council may have and they could schedule a Finance Committee Meeting if they wanted to discuss it more in depth. He added one thing that he would like to discuss in a Finance Committee Meeting would be to the water and sanitary sewer rates as he was currently making a few broad assumptions. Mr. Logan advised both the water and sanitary sewer funds were doing well and have decent reserves, but each year those rates are reviewed, and he would like to discuss it with the Finance Committee and a July date prior to that first Work Session would be best.

Mr. Moore advised the expenses show 6% budgeted for health insurance and he believes that was discussed in November of last year and he asked what the 2020 renewal for health insurance came in at.

Mr. Logan advised under 2%.

Mr. Moore asked what the 6% budgeted was based on.

Mr. Logan advised it was based on conservatism. He said right now the City's claims are running lower than last year and that is not a surprise because people have not been able to do many things over these last couple of months. Mr. Logan advised Medical Mutual's premium went up about 1.1% from 2019 into 2020 and everything else stayed the same as far as the makeup of the plan. He stated they also have Anthem for vision and the dental is with Delta Dental and those two coverages/premiums did not change.

Mr. Moore asked if they were going to send out for RFP's for healthcare as discussed last November.

Mr. Logan advised that is up to Council. He asked when he says RFP if he was talking about for professional services for the consulting.

Mr. Moore answered for health insurance as it was estimated at 6% and he knows they discussed doing a request for proposals last November. He said he wanted to make sure that they stick to that.

Mr. Logan asked if he meant a request for proposals for consultant services or for the insurance plan.

Mr. Moore advised for the health insurance plan.

Mr. Logan explained the consultants that the City use will do that.

Mr. Moore understood but asked if we are shopping for consultants this time.

Mr. Logan advised he would rather not, but if that is what Council wants then they certainly can.

Mr. Moore stated he does not see why they would not do so since it was discussed, and it was said that they would. He asked if he was now saying they were not going to, why wouldn't they?

Mr. Logan asked why they would when there is only a 1% increase in a premium.

Mr. Moore felt that Mr. Logan was essentially saying that if the City cannot save any money that they were just not going to send it out for proposals. He asked if he was missing something? Mr. Moore asked if giving it to our current agency by what they say is good, was good enough as opposed to seeking proposals from another agency. He stated it was discussed already and yet now they were not going to do it. Mr. Moore said he does not understand that.

Mr. Logan asked Mr. Moore how many other agents he would like for him to contact.

Mr. Moore answered maybe another one or two agents. He felt sending out an RFP was not that difficult, and he offered to write it up for him.

Mr. Logan advised they are meeting with Ohio Benefits group, which is the current consulting firm, in a couple of weeks and this is one of the things he wants to talk with them about. He said he would certainly contact two or three other consultants/brokerage firms. Mr. Logan stated he was not sure what the City would gain.

Mr. Moore said to make sure to keep our current agents in check.

Mr. Logan advised if Council is in favor of that, they would certainly do that.

Mr. Moore stated he did not see the harm in asking another agent to shop for what the current agent is doing as maybe they have a different idea or a better insight of something. He felt it costs no time.

Mr. Logan advised it does cost us some time.

Mr. Moore advised he does this for a living, and he knows what is involved in an RFP as he could write it up.

Mr. Logan advised he does not do this for a living, which is why the City relies on what they feel to be a very good consulting firm. He said they would certainly RFP out to other consulting firms and whoever they can quote for us, whether Medical Mutual, Cigna, Anthem or whoever was fine. Mr. Logan stated the firm the City is currently working with can get quotes from those providers, but he confirmed he would speak with a couple other consulting firms.

Mr. McBride asked how many years the current consultant been with the City.

Mr. Logan believed this is their third year.

Mr. McBride said he remembers the conversation that we would put an RFP out there at the expiration of this third year. He asked Mr. Moore if he could get a boilerplate RFP to Mr. Logan and Mr. Gasior to review. Mr. McBride felt they should put an RFP out for professional services to consultant. He said if it is quick and easy then they could move on it, but if not, it needs to be ready to go for the year after.

Mr. Logan suggested if they were going to do it, they should do it late summer before they start getting into all the renewals.

Mr. Butkowski felt they should hold a Finance Committee meeting the first part of July to discuss the water and sewer rates, but also have some deeper discussions on the preliminary budget. He understands it is preliminary, but just to see where things stand as they come out of this COVID crisis and it will be another month of data to compare whether the City is flattening or coming back out of it moving forward for 2021.

Mr. Fischer suggested they wait to see when Council was going to meet in July as it was not yet determined if they were going to stay with this modified schedule through the summer months.

Mr. McBride agreed they need to look over the revenues to see where they were headed. He said while businesses are re-opening, he believes they may see another wave of layoffs from businesses who have gotten through this far, but the financial hit may be catching up to them. Mr. McBride advised UH is making pay cuts across the board of administrators and physicians.

Mrs. Holtzmeier asked if it would be good timing to have a discussion at that Finance Committee meeting about the radio system upgrades in the Fire Department and that potential cost.

Mr. McBride pointed out they could hold a committee meeting on an evening that there was not a Council meeting, if necessary.

Mr. Butkowski said he would like to meet in July as the water and sewer rates are usually amended in August.

Mr. Logan agreed meeting in July would be good and if the Finance Committee is in a consensus after that meeting an Ordinance could be presented at the subsequent Work Session and passed at the Regular Meeting if Council wished and they could be make the rates effective for August 1, 2020.

2. [ORDINANCE NO. 55-20 – REAPPROPRIATIONS](#)

Mr. Logan

Mr. Logan explained the re-appropriations per the exhibit attached to the Ordinance.

Mr. Logan advised the re-appropriation for the wellness initiative was because they neglected to include it in the original budget. He explained they are incentives for people who participate in the wellness program and if they meet all the requirements, they received a reduction in their health insurance premium. Mr. Logan indicated there are quite a few employees participating in this program.

Mr. Logan advised he and Mr. Gasior met with Mr. Kramig regarding the Crusher's stadium. He said while he does not believe there has been an official announcement made in the Frontier League as far as whether any games would be played this year, it was determined in that meeting that the turf replacement would not happen until the end of the 2021 season and Mr. Kramig was in agreement with that decision.

Mr. Logan advised the heating, cooling and mechanical improvements project at the police station was currently underway.

Mr. Logan advised they sold notes for the Elizabeth, Joseph, Puth Sanitary Sewer Improvement Project and would be accepting those note proceeds later this week and then return the advance back as indicated in the Exhibit A of the Ordinance.

3. ~~ORDINANCE NO. 56-20 – TO AMEND CHAPTER 452 OF THE CODIFIED ORDINANCES REGARDING PROHIBITED STANDING OR PARKING PLACES~~ **REMOVED FROM THE AGENDA**

3a. RESOLUTION NO. R-16-20 – TO AFFIRM THAT ALL FUNDS RECEIVED FROM THE COUNTY CORONAVIRUS RELIEF DISTRIBUTION FUND PURSUANT TO S.B. 310 WILL BE EXPENDED ONLY TO COVER COSTS OF THE SUBDIVISION CONSISTENT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF SECTION 5001 OF THE CARES ACT AS DESCRIBED IN 42 U.S.C. 601(D) AND ANY APPLICABLE REGULATIONS Mr. Logan

Mr. Logan advised this Bill was introduced by the Senate and passed and the House should be voting on it any day, but he believes it is going to pass. The State of Ohio has requested \$350 million through this CARES Relief Fund and it is going to be allocated among the Counties based upon 2019’s Local Government Fund distribution. He said each County receives LGF monies and within each County all the political subdivisions receive some of that LGF. Mr. Logan explained that is how the Relief Funds are going to be distributed and based on how Avon receives LGF he estimated Avon might receive around \$300,000 if that is how the allocation is determined and assuming the State receives the \$350 million. He stated every entity is required to pass a Resolution as well as register on an Ohio grant funding site, which he will do. Mr. Logan advised they would be required to use the money received for COVID-19 related expenses of which they have been keeping track. He pointed out the plexiglass installed in Council Chambers is a good example of some of these expenses and they are hopeful the City will receive that funding.

4. REPORTS AND COMMENTS

MAYOR JENSEN advised most of them know that something special happened in the community this past weekend. He said while it was called a protest, he felt it was more of a rally and that they rallied around each other. Mayor Jensen stated it could not have happened without the group called, “The Change We Seek” and those six young ladies are present tonight in the Council Chambers. He said they are a special group and he and other City officials met with them prior to the protest and this group did everything that they said they would do. Mayor Jensen advised a lot of them in the City Administration stood in awe at what these young people put together, bigger than anything else in the County and around the area and to think it came from a small community like Avon. He said this group was able to do something that a lot of communities could not do and to watch everyone interact together gave him and the Administration a renewed mission to talk with one another and to be open with one another. Mayor Jensen stated he will be asking for a copy of the video of the opening remarks because he felt that they would be in awe just like he was when listening to them speak. He said their message was something different and Avon is a predominantly white community, but there is a lot of diversity within the community as well and they need to speak to that and stand up for one another and speak out against things that are wrong. Mayor Jensen advised they are all learning that because of six young ladies that took it upon themselves to show the adults how it is done, and he wanted to thank them publicly. He believes these young people know how he feels about them and their parents who were all around them supporting them and that is the one thing that makes us a community. Mayor Jensen stated he has always said he is proud that Avon is a community that comes together when someone is in need and this was big this past weekend. He said he wanted Council to meet the shining stars from this past weekend in these young people.

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

MR. BUTKOWSKI, WARD 1 had no further comments.

MRS. HOLTZMEIER, AT LARGE advised they all have perspectives and those perspectives and experiences form our thinking. Sometimes when they are privy to hear a different perspective then that is when

they know that change has the opportunity to occur. She said lately she has been really struck by the images that they are seeing of young people rallying and calling for change because a lot of adults tend to lose sight of the big picture. Mrs. Holtzmeier thinks they could all benefit by taking a lesson from kids. Kids who, in Avon this weekend, are ages 10 and up to 19 out helping the community to have a way of seeing things a little more clearly. She said she was excited as well to see these young people here tonight as their local voices are some of our leaders of tomorrow. Mrs. Holtzmeier advised while they were here with them in this moment, she hoped they would share with this body some of those powerful words they were able to say on Saturday. She hoped Council would be able to hear more from them tonight as well as tomorrow and beyond and she thanked them for being here.

Mrs. Holtzmeier advised with Ohio opening in stages she asked Mayor Jensen for a status report of our City playgrounds and how they would be re-opening those safely for our residents.

Mayor Jensen advised the playgrounds are going to be opening Wednesday 6/10 and they already had a crew come in and disinfect all the playground equipment. He said they were still trying to get some kind of clarity on some of the requirements being asked of them and he has been in touch with the Lorain County Health Department to specify what a "deep clean" once a week means. Mayor Jensen stated the City crews will be out cleaning restrooms and porta pots at least twice a day and they will also be installing some signage to let parents know what is expected. He said they have a plan for more signage, but also, they will continue to monitor what is going on and take advice from the County Health Department. Mayor Jensen said they are a little disappointed in the Governor's office as there is not a lot of clarity beyond being allowed to open, but the City was taking whatever precautions they could.

Mrs. Holtzmeier said there would be some children very happy to hear that news and she hoped parents continued to exercise safety when they bring them to the playgrounds.

Mrs. Holtzmeier advised she is hearing quite a bit about ticks and mosquitoes, especially in the parks. She knows Lorain County Public Health is pretty busy right now, but she asked if they have informed the City when they would be spraying Avon.

Mayor Jensen advised the company that provides the lawn care for City properties puts an application down to control the ticks and fleas and that would happen over the next couple of weeks. He said once the mosquitoes start arriving, the Health Department will be out spraying again, but he has not received a date for that yet.

MR. MCBRIDE, WARD 2 advised he attended what he chooses to call a rally versus a protest on Saturday and he stayed for approximately 45 minutes off to the side toward the police station. He said he saw several young people together and one stopped and thanked a police officer for their presence and support. Mr. McBride thought that was a great gesture and he noted that there were several of our officers standing inside the crowd supporting everyone. He said there was a lot of concern about people in the rally being too close to the road at the intersection of Detroit and SR83 as it is a dangerous intersection. Mr. McBride gave his compliments to the young people and while the City incurred a cost to support that rally with Service, Police and Fire his daughter reminded him that was not the viewpoint he should have of the situation and she was right. He said having younger aged people provides perspective and he was glad there were no incidents and "hats off" to the students who planned it, the parents who supported it and the participants as that was nice to see.

MR. MOORE, WARD 3 had no further comments.

MR. RADCLIFFE, WARD 4 had no comments.

MR. WITHERSPOON, AT LARGE had no comments.

MR. FISCHER, AT LARGE advised he would also like to echo the comments on how well the protest went this weekend. He said it is always special when you see people doing things the right way. Mr. Fischer stated there was a lot of concern expressed on social media and none of that came true and is because of the organizers. He said it was cool to see how the crowd respected the wishes of the group organizers and they kept control and he thanked them.

Mr. Fischer advised the next Council meetings will be on June 22nd and there will be a Parks & Recreation Committee meeting at 6 p.m. before the Work Session at 7 p.m.

DIRECTORS/ADMINISTRATION:

MR. CUMMINS, CITY ENGINEER had no comments.

MR. FARMER, SERVICE DIRECTOR had no comments.

MS. FECHTER, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING COORDINATOR thanked Council for helping fund the Small Business Relief Program. She said there are 35 businesses that will be receiving \$2,500 and they will be giving another 10-15 businesses, those with only one or two employees, a smaller amount of money. Ms. Fechter advised she has delivered approximately 10 checks so far and the gratitude these businesses feel is beyond words. She stated while \$2,500 does not seem like a lot of money, but when you walk into a business that is on the verge of having to close their doors it really makes a difference. Ms. Fechter thanked Mayor Jensen and City Council for allowing her to be able to provide that benefit to those businesses.

MR. GASIOR, LAW DIRECTOR advised while he did not make it to the protest this past weekend he felt he had to "tip his cap" to the group organizers for standing up for what they believe in and making it known to the public and he hopes they can really change the world because things do need to be changed.

MR. LOGAN, FINANCE DIRECTOR said he would like to echo what Mr. Gasior said as well.

Mr. Logan advised they sold the notes last week for the Elizabeth, Joseph, Puth Sanitary Sewer Improvement Project at \$3.6 million for a one year note and received a net yield of approximately .40%. He said that is the lowest municipal interest rate in the State of Ohio in four years. Mr. Logan stated it was a very successful sale and the project is well underway now.

Mrs. Holtzmeier said well done.

MR. STREATOR, SAFETY DIRECTOR advised he would also like to echo the comments that have gone around tonight regarding the protest held on Saturday. He said his experience in working with this group of young ladies was awesome from the Police Department and Safety Forces standpoint. Mr. Streator stated from the minute they met with this group there was nothing but positive comments from everybody involved. He said the fact that young people want to get involved to change things is very reassuring. He said they look forward to the Safety Forces meeting with them in the future to not only take what they started on Saturday but continue to work with them in changing what needs changed. Mr. Streator added it was very reassuring to work not only with the Safety Forces to make this a safe event, but all City departments came together without hesitation and worked well together, and he thanked them. He talked with many of the Council Members about their concerns and the community as a whole and everything worked out really well.

AUDIENCE:

Katie LaHoty, a 2020 graduate of Avon High School, advised their organization's (The Change We Seek) official statement is that they want to demonstrate their solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and bring justice for George Floyd and other lives lost to police brutality. They want to raise awareness of the systemic racism and oppression that black people face in America today. A central goal of their organization is to bring attention to the racial inequalities facilitated by the current justice system. Their group aims to offer Avon and surrounding communities an outlet to show their support for positive change through peaceful protest. Specifically, they are working to provide citizens with the opportunity to exercise their First Amendment rights on a local level especially if they were unable to participate in the larger movements in Cleveland. The City of Avon, the Police Department and their organization worked together to make sure it was a safe successful event. They hope that this protest spurs positive change and invokes more conversations within the community. They want this to encourage further local activism that works toward impactful change within society. This protest is one example of the many possible ways to spark the conversation at home and prove their education over social injustices and highlight

the importance of voting. They want to use this platform as an outlet to highlight black voices within their community.

Avery Erkskine, a 2020 graduate of Avon High School, advised growing up in Avon her whole life she is extremely privileged. She said her parents are still together and she lives in a nice neighborhood and she never has to worry about where her next meal comes from or if college is even an option. But, even with so much privilege she still experiences racism. Ms. Erkskine stated they live in a world where small things are dehumanizing every day and she realized that from the age of eight when she had to buy flesh tone tights for her dance class, except those tights were not her flesh tone, but it was every other little girl's in her class. For competitions at age nine, she had to straighten her hair because she looked different, but her skin color already makes her look different. She said as she got older her differences were pointed out in other ways. While sitting in a classroom talking about slavery, all eyes were on her. When someone made a blatantly racist joke in her presence, all eyes were on her, but instead of jumping to her defense they would say, "Oh, but not you...you are different" and she asked, "Why? Because she is a well-spoken woman and grew up in the same privileged area as you?" Ms. Erkskine asked for them to make sense of their comment. Those same people are the ones who think it is okay to say, "I have a black friend so I can say the n-word" instead of "I have a black friend so I will fight for black rights". She inquired as to why grown adults get to tell her that she got into West Point because she is black instead of saying she got in because she is intelligent. The same people who said, "Wow! Your hair looks very pretty straight and she should fix it that way more often" now say, "Wow! I love your curly hair and that theirs is so boring". Ms. Erkskine wishes as a society that it was imbedded into young girls that their hair does not have to be straight to be pretty and she wished they did not say, "Oh, it is good to have dark skin, but not too dark". She knows these issues and protests are not a new thing, but now more than ever she feels compelled to use her voice to make a change. Marginalized groups often go unheard which is why once-peaceful protests have turned violent to get the attention they deserve. The President of the United States can tweet countless times a day about sending troops against his own people, instead of hearing their cries and using his platform to demand changes to the injustices that happen and how the justice system must be changed by acknowledging that this cannot keep happening. How come angry armed white men get to storm the Capitol and spit in officers faces because they demand haircuts and yet face no repercussions? Meanwhile peaceful protesters across America are faced with tear gas and rubber bullets, for what? Because they did not like the message? No, it is due to the color of their skin. Those white men are seen as very good people who just want their lives back instead of thugs. Ms. Erkskine said she is hearing solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement because enough is enough. Police no longer get to benefit from the corrupt system that protects them, even when they commit racist acts. She stated she lives for the day that she will not have to fear for her father or brother when they get pulled over for something as simple as speeding. She lives for the day that their skin color will not be seen as a threat when they go to reach for their license. Ms. Erkskine lives for the day when systemic racism no longer exists, and she lives for the day when they are all treated as equals.

Jenna Mintzlaff, a 2020 graduate of Avon High School, advised obviously they had no control if anything bad would have happened during the protest and that was a major concern of the group and they could only prepare with the local police for possible situations. She indicated they felt lucky that the only negativity they received were some hand gestures and she felt that was the best they could have hoped for. Ms. Mintzlaff said it shows that their message was being heard and the negativity was overtaken and outnumbered by all the happy smiles she saw from the passersby. She stated nothing went wrong with the event and they are so grateful, and she thanked the City of Avon, the Mayor, the Police Department and more because they are definitely the reason that this all went well.

Abby Purcell, a 2019 graduate of Avon High School, agreed with everything Ms. Mintzlaff said and she hopes her group can continue to work with the City and the Police Department and get more people involved. She stated a lot of people came up to them asking where they can get a mask or a tee-shirt with their group name on it and they asked what they could do to help and how they could get more involved. Ms. Purcell hopes they can do more things because they heard the voices of the people saying they want to get involved and she was hopeful to be able to work with the City to make that happen.

Skyla Floyd, an incoming junior at Avon High School, advised this weekend warmed her heart. She said she is active in the community and she is a cheerleader and it was nice to see people she cheers for were cheering for her and people that look like her. Ms. Floyd wants the conversation to keep going and she wants people to understand that no matter their differences this is a humanitarian issue and it not a political thing and that anyone can get involved and anyone can support the Black Lives Matter movement. She said she wants everyone to understand that change can happen and that their conversations are not hostile.

Julia Morrison, a 2019 graduate of Avon High School said she also wanted to extend a thank you and it was really nice to see how willing everyone was to work with them and how they did not talk down to them and treated all of them with so much respect. She stated that means a lot to them because sometimes their young age is not taken seriously, and it meant a lot as every person they were in contact with was so open to hearing them out and listening.

Leonard (Kip) Erskine of 3417 Truxton Place advised Avery Erskine, who will be attending West Point in the fall, is his daughter. He said he has been a resident of Avon for 23 years this December and he was the fifth homeowner in Highland Park and that subdivision now has over 400 homes. Mr. Erskine stated he wanted to say, "thank you" to this entire body. He said he has a lot of friends on Council and in the Administration. He coached soccer with Mr. Farmer; Mr. Logan was his neighbor for a long time; he and Mr. Butkowski are both in the medical profession and they talk shop sometimes; and Mrs. Holtzmeier was walking her dog in the neighborhood the other day and he stopped to talk about his yard that was torn up. He said he knows Mr. Radcliffe as he is good friends with his neighbor, and he sees him at football games and he and Mr. Witherspoon serve on the Avon Lions together. Mr. Erskine advised it feels good to be here with people that he knows, but as a parent of one of the few black residents in Avon what happened this weekend was amazing. He said he loves what the Mayor said that it was not so much a protest, but more of a rally of our community, of people getting together for something that they see is wrong. Mr. Erskine felt it was not so much an issue for blacks, but it affects all of them. He said he wanted to thank them all and at the rally he shook the Mayor's hand and thanked him for his support. Mr. Erskine stated he went around to every police officer he could see at the event to shake their hand and thank them for what they do and to thank them for protecting this community and for putting their lives on the line for us every day. He said he wanted the officers to know that this rally was not against them, but for those things that were systemic in nature and he wanted this body to know that. Mr. Erskine stated as a father and a proud resident of Avon, everywhere he goes he brags about this City, where he lives and what it means to him to live here.

5. ADJOURN: 7:44 p.m.
There being no further business the Work Session of Council was adjourned.

PASSED: _____

SIGNED BY: _____
Brian Fischer, Council President

ATTEST: _____
Barbara Brooks, Clerk of Council