

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
JULY 20, 2020**

The following are the minutes for the special meeting of the City Council held at 2:00 pm on Monday, July 20, 2020, in the Training Room, Public Safety Building, 825 41st Avenue N.E., Columbia Heights, Minnesota.

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Schmitt called the meeting to order at 2:00 pm.

Present: Mayor Schmitt; Councilmember Buesgens; Councilmember Murzyn, Jr.; Councilmember Novitsky; Councilmember Williams

Also Present: Kelli Bourgeois, City Manager; Lenny Austin, Police Chief; Aaron Chirpich, Community Development Director; Renee Dougherty, Library Director; Kevin Hansen, Public Works Director; Joe Kloiber, Finance Director; Keith Windschitl, Recreation Director; Jackie Zillmer, Assistant Finance Director; Charlie Thompson, Fire Chief; Dan O'Brien, Assistant Fire Chief; Ben Sandell, Communications Coordinator; Nicole Tingley, City Clerk

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. MISSION STATEMENT

Mayor Schmitt decided to skip reading the Mission Statement

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Councilmember Novitsky, seconded by Councilmember Murzyn, Jr., to approve the agenda. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

5. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

A. New Business & Reports

a. CARES Act Funding Review and Action

City Manager Bourgeois stated that the City of Columbia Heights will be receiving \$1.57 million dollars in CARES Act funding. In preparation staff has prepared a first draft of a spreadsheet with COVID-19 related expenditures for the City Council to consider. She provided an overview of the criteria noting that the costs must be spent between March 1 and November 15 and must be necessary in dealing with current COVID-19 pandemic.

Bourgeois stated that staff time can be funded by CARES Act funding only if their time was taken away from their regular duties and transitioned over to COVID-19 specific activities. She stated that one discussion point will be whether or not the City should use CARES funding for staff time or elsewhere.

Bourgeois shared that the funds can also be distributed to businesses and residents and that the City could set-up a grant program. She shared that City staff finds it important to support the local businesses, but it is a City Council decision. If the City Council were to decide to establish a grant program, it would also need to be determined how to administer it. Bourgeois stated that City staff do not believe staff should administer the program from a time perspective, a logistics

perspective and to take away any perception of favoritism. Fees to administer the program could also come out of CARES funding.

Bourgeois stated that in drafting the spreadsheet, City staff tried to come up with expenses that would not only help with COVID-19 now, but also be of long-term benefit including technology upgrades.

Councilmember Novitsky stated that he thinks that we should take out the wages, keep all of the other expenses, and provide grants to for-profit businesses.

It was clarified that the current expense list totals \$2,052,520 in expenses as \$60,000 was added for upgrades to the Library Community Room as the back-up Emergency Operations Center (EOC). If wages are removed the total would be reduced to \$1,324,500. It was also clarified that items on the ideas to remove list are included in the expense total.

Expenses were highlighted and discussed for each department. The spreadsheet of expenses includes both expenses already incurred and proposed expenses.

Finance/Liquor/IS

Bourgeois stated that the total expenses for Finance and IS and Liquor minus wages is \$29,410. It was noted this had been updated since the packet was produced.

Councilmember Murzyn, Jr. inquired about if not including the wages would affect layoffs. Bourgeois stated that it would not indicating that wages were already budgeted for.

Bourgeois stated that unemployment wages, emergency pay wages, and Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) wages were not taken out in the wage calculation. She would like City Council feedback on that noting that she would advocate for keeping unemployment wages paid for by the CARES Act funding particularly for the liquor store as it is an enterprise fund.

Finance Director Kloiber added that unemployment wages, emergency pay wages, FFCRA wages were not budgeted for. Kloiber also noted in regards to the inspections department that although their wages were budgeted for by being shut down, the revenue to fund those wages was also affected. Kloiber stated it may be worth considering funding inspection wages by the CARES Act funding. Community Development Director Chirpich agreed. It was determined this amount would be approximately \$6,400.

Bourgeois went through the expenses for Finance, IS, and Liquor item by item. Some of the items included tablets, UV air filters, scanners, and phones.

Administration

Bourgeois covered the expenses for the Administration Department. Many items related to elections including Plexiglas shields, tables, and chairs. It was noted pens at a cost of approximately \$3,500 need to be added in. Other Administration expenses include agenda management software, Council and Commission tablets, and video cameras.

There was a discussion about the cable live broadcast expense of \$53,000. It would cost \$40,000 for the equipment and approximately \$13,000 for the yearly subscription. This would not be transferrable to the new City Hall. Councilmembers noted the unreliability of the current system. If this system/service was not purchased the system could be patched in pieces and maybe another solution determined, but it would not be reliable for livestreaming. It cannot be determined how many people watch the cable live.

Councilmember Buesgens expressed that \$66,000 (2 years) is a lot of money and that people would understand if they needed to wait a day for the video to be uploaded and not live streamed. In her case, with not having cable, she would have to wait a day.

It was clarified that the service would tape and record the meetings, therefore a city position would be eliminated. This would help off-set the yearly subscription cost.

Communications Coordinator Sandell explained that patches could be made to the system including a new graphic generator for approximately \$20,000. Councilmember Novitsky noted that it would still not be as reliable and that he knows of residents that watch it live. Councilmember Murzyn, Jr. agreed.

Councilmember Buesgens asked about live streaming it on the internet noting that she does not have cable and would have to wait for the video to be uploaded. Communications Coordinator Sandell responded that it could be done and that increased bandwidth would help with that.

Councilmember Novitsky expressed that the \$53,000 expense should be kept as it would be more reliable after elimination of the staff time and still \$20,000 to patch without the new equipment/service it would not be as much of a difference.

Councilmember Murzyn, Jr. noted that even after the \$20,000 something else could go wrong with the system.

Mayor Schmitt asked how much it would cost to join the cable commission. Sandell noted that they would not provide extra streaming service, but it would cost \$70,000 to be a part of it.

It was determined to keep the expense on the spreadsheet noting that it would have to be approved by City Council before purchasing.

Recreation

Bourgeois stated that the total Recreation cost without wages is \$21,240. She did note that extra custodial hours are proposed to be funded with the CARES Act funding as they were not budgeted. Some other items included laptops, door pulls, and portable handwashing stations.

Library

Bourgeois stated there is not any wages to remove from the library number. Other costs include upgrades to the EOC, laptops, improved story stroll storyboards, and video editing software.

Community Development

Bourgeois stated in regards to staff time the \$6,400 number determined earlier in the meeting is the better number to use for an estimate of wages instead of the ones listed on the spreadsheet. Bourgeois noted one of the items proposed to remove would be the grant to businesses for liquor license fees as this could be included in the larger business grant program. She did note however that the City Council should consider how to nonprofits with liquor licenses would be treated.

Another item highlighted was the electronic plan review software. This would eliminate touching of shared papers and also increase efficiency. The Community Development department will know more including if it is feasible to accomplish in the allotted time frame after a webinar with the vendor this week. It would be transferrable to the new City Hall.

Fire

Bourgeois noted that the Fire Department has the highest expense amount. Some highlighted expenses include turnout gear, response vehicle for Assistant Chief, EOC technology upgrades, and squad computer replacements. The EOC technology upgrades would provide technology needed for real time emergency management and allow for separating of emergency management staff. Kloiber added that the EOC upgrades would also for moving around of staff within each space without a IS staff member moving cables around in-person. The squad computer replacements is an idea of an item to be removed.

Police

Bourgeois highlighted some of the police department CARES Act including Bow-Mac Emergency Management training for management and supervisors, captain office remodel, laptops, and a credit card swipe. The captain office remodel is an idea of an item to be removed.

Public Works

Bourgeois went through the public works department expenses including air purifiers, disinfection box for phones/tablets, equipment for remote meetings, various types of PPE, Tyvek suits, mobile handwashing stations, a forklift, system for disinfecting jetter hoses, pressure washer, 2 vehicles to allow single occupancy, ion generating air handling units, COVID killer software programming for interceptors, and radios.

Hansen commented that the equipment for remote meetings is to help separate their staff and still be able to hold meetings. Currently public works is having crews also work out of the Circle Terrace building to help ensure staff availability in the case of infection.

There was a discussion regarding the forklift. It was stated there have been large gallon drums unloaded. This was an idea of an item to be removed. The City Council reasoned to keep it in as a workers compensation claim in not moving them safely would be more expensive than the forklift.

Bourgeois noted that one public works vehicle is an idea of an item to remove.

The ion generating air handling units would be transferrable to the new City Hall. These clean the air by filtering bacteria and viruses.

The COVID killer software programming is a system that can be installed in police cars 2016 and newer that cleans police cars by bringing them to a very high temperature.

It was clarified that the CARES funding can fund the entire item of items used over and over like forklifts not just the depreciation cost of 1 year. If the items were to be sold, the money would have to be returned.

Kloiber added that the system used to track asset depreciation has a field for funding source so we would know in the future. He also stated that the federal property standards have steps to go through including using it for another program with further down on the list being applying the proceeds towards the program. The federal government is not equipped to take items back.

Mayor Schmitt asked about funding a portion of an item with the grant. Assistant Finance Director Zillmer recommended funding entire items and eliminating other items to make the difference from an administrative and audit standpoint.

There was a discussion regarding the business grants primarily regarding dollar amount and qualification criteria. It is unknown how many businesses are in the community and how many would need funding. Chirpich stated based on other communities and the Anoka County a grant amount of \$10,000 has been discussed. There would be administration fees for the grant.

The Council discussed the idea of including the \$31,500 allocated for Liquor License grants into the overall business grant program. Bourgeois noted that there would need to be a definition of a business and dependent on what that is groups that have Liquor Licenses like the Lions or the VFW may not be qualified. It would have to be decided if businesses could receive both types of grants.

Chirpich shared some potential baseline criteria that have come up in conversations with peer cities and Anoka County. Councilmembers inquired about criteria and example businesses.

Bourgeois clarified that the City Council would approve the grant program as a package at a future City Council meeting and that staff is seeking general direction to work on it further.

Bourgeois noted that expenditures over her spending authority of \$15,000 would be approved at future City Council meetings, but those under would not. She asked the City Council for their feedback.

The City Council discussed the ideas for items to cut list and determined to keep the forklift, the second public works vehicle, captain office remodel, and the liquor license grants. The City

Council decided to remove the fire squad computer replacements. Turn out gear would be kept and KN95 masks would be kept. Regular wages would not be included.

This would leave approximately \$200,000 for business grants plus the \$31,500 for liquor license grants.

City Staff will complete more research on the grants including number of businesses and administration fees and bring proposals soon with multiple concepts for dollar amounts.

6. CITY COUNCIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

The City Council decided to skip over the City Council and Administrative Reports.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Buesgens, seconded by Councilmember Murzyn, Jr., to adjourn. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 3:41 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicole Tingley, City Clerk/Council Secretary