



Martins Ferry City Council Meeting Minutes of May 20, 2020

The Martins Ferry City Council met in Regular Session on Wednesday, May 20, 2020, at 6:00 p.m., at the Martins Ferry Recreation Center due to the continued concern surrounding the Coronavirus Pandemic. The meeting was called to order by Council President Kristine Davis with the Pledge of Allegiance recited by those present in chamber, followed by a prayer by the Clerk.

Answering Roll Call were Bob Hunker, First Ward Council Member, Bruce Shrodes, Second Ward Council Member; Suzanne Armstrong, Third Ward Council Member; Rick Rodgers, Fourth Ward Council Member; Thomas Burns, Jim Schramm and Jack Regis, Council at Large Members.

President Davis thanked Council for their patience in meeting at the Recreation Center. This venue allows for social distancing. Hopefully in the next couple of weeks as the Governor relaxes the COVID-19 restrictions, Council can again meet in Chambers with some adjustments.

Minutes: Mr. Burns asked to add to the May 6, 2020 minutes, the reasons Council asked for the revision of the *Resolution Declaring a State of Emergency Due to the COVID-19*.

Correspondence: There was no correspondence.

Reports of Officers of the City:

Mayor: Mayor Davies reported that East Ohio Regional Hospital (EORH) has been sold and thanked all those who helped in this accomplishment.

The Chamber of Commerce is downsizing and asked the Mayor if the City has available office space suitable to their needs. There is room in the Basement of the City Building, formerly used by the EMS that would be available.

After being closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the City Building will open up to the public on May 28.

The Mayor asked Council their opinion on opening up the Fire Stations for parties and other functions. The city can't be responsible for social distancing at these private parties. This issue can be discussed when the Governor relaxes the rules on mass gathering limits of 10 people.

Mr. Regis made a motion to change the order of the meeting to allow Attorney David Croft and Mr. Bernie Albertini, Chief Operating Officer of EORH, to speak regarding the sale of EORH. After an affirmative voice vote, the motion carried.

Attorney Croft explained that he represents Dr. John Johnson, who purchased EORH. He has created two separate companies for Dr. Johnson. One company owns the real estate called Access Martins Ferry and the other is called East Ohio LLC which will have the trade name of East Ohio Regional Hospital. Attorney Croft gave a brief history of the hospital and explained how this sale transpired. He told Council that the hospital needs equipment and many upgrades. Laundry and food service will be kept in-house. Plans are to eventually employ around 600 people.

Attorney Croft is asking the city to pass a resolution allocating 75% of the employee's 1% city income tax to the hospital for the next 10 years. He estimates that Medicaid, Medicare and Blue Cross Blue Shield will comprise 80% of the hospital's income and it will take around 90 days before the

hospital will receive any money from these entities. If Martins Ferry “embraces” the hospital with financial concessions, then Attorney Croft believes County, State and Federal governments will looking more favorably on offering additional funding.

Mr. Albertini said the hospital will open in phases. Phase 1 will be opening core services such as the Emergency Room, X-Ray, Lab, and in-patient facilities. Phase 2 – Long-Term Care and Skilled Unit. Phase 3 – Psychiatric and Drug/Alcohol Rehab. No opening date has been set.

Mr. Regis made a motion to ask Mr. Stecker to prepare an Ordinance to allow 75% of the 1% employee city income tax to be allocated to the hospital for 10 years. Mr. Burns seconded the motion. A roll call vote was heard with Regis, Hunker, Shrodes, Armstrong, Rodgers, Burns and Schramm voting yes. The motion carried.

Service Director: Mr. Sutak stated that city crews have been patching potholes and cutting grass in the cemetery when weather permits. He reported the repair work for the St. Rt. 647 slip and the paving project started on Monday, May 18.

Mr. Rodgers asked Mr. Sutak to look at the alley behind the house at 530 North Zane Highway. This house has cracks in the back wall and could fall into the alley.

Mr. Sutak told Council he has submitted applications for funding for the demolition of 5 houses in the city.

Safety Director: No Report

Auditor: Auditor Randall thanked Mayor Davies for his passion to get the hospital open. The Income Tax Report was distributed to Council. The State Auditors will be at the City Building on May 26 & 27 to finalize the city’s audit. They will be scrutinizing the Records Retention Policy. Auditor Randall would like an Ordinance to revise this policy and instead of listing specific names, list the members serving on the Committee as: current Mayor, current Service Director, current Safety Director, Auditor and Law Director. These members can then select a secretary and two alternates.

Auditor Randall stated that the hospitalization insurance for the city employees will increase by 3.85%. It was suggested to hold a public hearing for the budget on Wednesday, July 15 at 5:30 p.m. in Council Chambers. The budget has to be submitted to the County by July 20, 2020.

Water Superintendent: Mr. Suto reported that the first round of hydrant flushing was suspended due to the COVID-19 Pandemic but will resume in July.

Law Director: No report.

Police Department: No report.

Fire Department: No report.

Code Administrator: No report.

Park District: No report.

Reports of Committees of Council:

Finance and Audit: Mr. Regis arranged a Finance Committee Meeting for Tuesday, June 9 at 5:30 p.m. in Council Chambers.

Street: No report.

Ordinance: No report.

Sewer/Sidewalk: No report.

Code Administration: Mr. Regis would like to have a meeting next month. He is researching on ways other cities enforce ordinances.

Safety: No report.

Service: The Service Committee met on May 13, 2020 to discuss the trash problems in the city. Bags of trash are thrown in the alleys which attracts animals and rodents. The Committee is asking the Administration to enforce the present ordinance that states households can have up to 3 garbage cans with lids. Mr. Shrodes ask that a warning be placed on Utility bills stating if a household doesn't use trash cans with lids, they will be fined. If there continues to be problems, the city will purchase cans for households without them and include the cost of the cans on their water bill.

The administration was also asked to enforce the ordinance that states reflective tape needs to be displayed on dumpsters parked in the streets.

A free clean-up day for city residents has been scheduled for Saturday, June 13, 2020, 8:00 a.m. – noon at the old city garage on First Street. Residents can check the city's website on items that will be accepted.

The city is still waiting on the cylinder for the Transfer Station. Currently it is not feasible for the city to purchase a truck/trailer and hire someone to take the garbage to the Landfill. The Mayor has spoken to Lytton Sanitation Services who can supply the city with dumpsters which can hold about 6-7 truckloads. Cost would be \$175 per load plus tipping fee.

A 3% increase on utilities goes into effect on June 1, 2020. The Mayor asked Council to forgo this increase for at least 3 months due to the burdens of the pandemic on the citizens. The funds that would benefit from this increase are currently secure.

Mr. Burns cautioned that as public buildings begin to open up and allow 50% capacity, signs will need posted stating the Maximum Room Capacity. He explained that room capacity can vary depending on access, exits, and type of business, not just square footage. Safety Director Regis noted that room capacities can also vary depending on the usage of the room. The State Fire Marshall is an excellent resource to determine occupancy capacity. Auditor Randall said the State Auditors have asked if the city has a form that people sign relieving the city of liability if the COVID-19 virus is contracted while using city facilities. Mr. Stecker said it would be good to have a form but was unsure if it would protect the city against a lawsuit.

Cemetery: Mr. Burns complimented the crews for keeping the grass cut in the cemetery, especially with the rainy weather.

Public Relations: Mr. Rodgers said the Chamber of Commerce has cancelled the Fireworks Sky Show scheduled for July 2 due to social distancing restrictions due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, the Chamber banquet set for September will still be held. An idea for forming a central Chamber of Commerce Committee with other communities is being explored.

Real Estate/Utility Committee: No report.

Income Tax: Mrs. Armstrong did not have a report but asked Auditor Randall if the R.I.T.A. meeting that was cancelled in March could be rescheduled. Auditor Randall will check to see if they are releasing their employees to travel.

Citizens To Be Heard: President Davis reminded citizens to limit their speaking to 5 minutes.

Marcia Ciko, 709 Indiana Street, expressed her concerns on the financial concessions that Council was considering giving to the purchaser of East Ohio Regional Hospital. She was afraid that this company may not be able to meet its financial obligations to the city and end up costing the city more money. Ms. Ciko also wanted to know what the hospital planned to put back into the community. She advised Council to use “good sound financial judgement”.

Richard Hord of 915 Virginia Street, said he was excited about the prospects of EORH reopening. He thanked Mayor Davies, Mr. Sutak, Mr. Suto and everyone else involved in the process for their hard work in getting the hospital reopened. Mr. Hord expressed hope that with Dollar General, Dollar Tree and the hospital opening in the near future that this might inspire other businesses to open in Martins Ferry. President Davis said that the city is “cautiously optimistic” that the city will attract other businesses. The Mayor told Mr. Hord that he is optimistic about securing county funding for the hospital. Regarding citizens response to the Pandemic, Mr. Regis thinks people have respected social distancing but believes the number of cases will rise due to increased testing. Mr. Hord complimented city workers on getting work done in a professional manner through this pandemic.

Ordinances and Resolutions:

An Ordinance Vacating a Portion of Madison Street in the City of Martins Ferry, Ohio.

This ordinance has a revised title which more accurately reflects what is being vacated. The content has not changed. This ordinance was given a second reading. Mr. Regis made a motion to table a third reading of this Ordinance until Council can return to Chambers and hold a public hearing. Motion was seconded by Mr. Schramm. A roll call vote was heard with Regis, Hunker, Shrodes, Armstrong, Rodgers, Burns and Schramm voting yes. The motion carried.

A Resolution Declaring A State Of Emergency In The City Of Martins Ferry Due To The Coronavirus (Covid-19) Disease Outbreak.

This Resolution was given a second reading. Motion was made by Mr. Shrodes to suspend the rules. Motion was seconded by Mr. Burns. A roll call vote was heard with Shrodes, Armstrong, Rodgers, Burns, Schramm, Regis and Hunker voting yes. The motion carried. Mr. Hunker made a motion to pass the Resolution as read. Mr. Schramm seconded the motion. A roll call vote was heard with Hunker, Shrodes, Armstrong, Rodgers, Burns, Schramm, and Regis voting yes. The motion carried and the Resolution was declared passed.

An Ordinance Directing Reimbursement By The Sewer Capital Project Fund To The Permanent Improvement Fund For The Repair And Installation Of A Lift Station.

This Ordinance was given a first reading. Motion was made by Mr. Regis to suspend the rules. Motion was seconded by Mr. Shrodes. A roll call vote was heard with Regis, Hunker, Shrodes, Armstrong, Rodgers, Burns and Schramm voting yes. The motion carried. Mr. Rodgers made a motion to pass the Ordinance as read. Motion was seconded by Mr. Hunker. A roll call vote was heard with

Rodgers, Burns, Schramm, Regis, Hunker, Shrodes and Armstrong voting yes. The motion carried and the Ordinance was declared passed.

A Resolution of Appreciation.

This Resolution was given a first reading and recognizes Marian Klier for her work with the Chamber of Commerce. Motion was made by Mrs. Armstrong to suspend the rules. Motion was seconded by Mr. Shrodes. A roll call vote was heard with Armstrong, Rodgers, Burns, Schramm, Regis, Hunker, and Shrodes voting yes. The motion carried. Motion was made by Mr. Hunker to pass this Resolution as read. Mr. Schramm seconded the motion. A roll call vote was heard with Hunker, Shrodes, Armstrong, Rodgers, Burns, Schramm, and Regis voting yes. The motion carried and the Resolution was declared passed.

Miscellaneous Business:

Mr. Rodgers made a motion to allow the Chamber of Commerce to use the offices in the lower level of the City Building. Motion was seconded by Mrs. Armstrong. A roll call vote was heard with Rodgers, Burns, Schramm, Regis, Hunker, Shrodes and Armstrong voting yes. The motion carried

Mr. Regis made a motion to reflect Council has received reports from the Officers and Management, and to incorporate these reports into the minutes. Motion was seconded by Mrs. Armstrong. After an affirmative voice vote, the motion passed.

Mr. Shrodes said last year Council agreed to give the Park District a truck to haul equipment. The organization has not received this vehicle. Councilman Regis will ask Larry Deaton which truck was promised and inform the Mayor.

Mr. Shrodes asked for volunteers to help place flags on Veteran's graves in Riverview Cemetery beginning at 12:00 noon on Friday, May 22. If there is enough flags, they will also be place on graves in Walnut Grove Cemetery.

Mr. Shrodes inquired on regulations for firehouse functions. Councilman Regis said the Liberty Fire Station has cancelled all functions through July. The Mayor said Council could wait another month to address this issue.

Mr. Stecker will prepare an ordinance on records retention and send it to Council before the next meeting.

Mr. Rodgers made a motion to hold a public hearing on the city budget on Wednesday, July 15, 2020 at 5:30 p.m. in Council Chambers. Mr. Schramm seconded the motion. A roll call vote was heard with Rodgers, Burns, Schramm, Regis, Hunker, Shrodes and Armstrong voting yes. The motion carried.

Mr. Hunker moved to adjourn, which was seconded by Mrs. Armstrong. After an affirmative voice vote, the meeting was adjourned with a salute to the flag.