

TOWNSHIP OF O'HARA
SPECIAL COUNCIL WORKSHOP MINUTES
NOVEMBER 16, 2021

I. Opening Procedures

- A. Call to Order by President Smith.
- B. Pledge of Allegiance led by President Smith.
- C. Roll Call

Council Members Present: Robert John Smith, President of Council; Charles A. Vogel, Vice-President of Council; George H. Stewart, Second Ward; Allison Berger, Fourth Ward; Cassandra Eccles, Fifth Ward; John R. Denny, Jr., At-Large

Absent: Gregory Caprara, Third Ward

Also Present: Julie A. Jakubec, CPA, CGMA, Township Manager; Charles W. Steinert, Jr., P.E., Township Engineer; Christopher Komora, Code Enforcement / Storm Water Coordinator; Loren R. Kephart, Public Service Superintendent; Cathy Bubas, Manager's Secretary

Manager Jakubec read a statement explaining the virtual meeting procedures.

II. Presentation by ALCOSAN Regarding Tunnels

Manager Jakubec stated ALCOSAN has requested time to present an overview of a regional tunnel system.

Representatives of ALCOSAN in attendance were Jeanne Clark, Director of Governmental Affairs; Kim Kennedy, Director of Engineering and Construction; Mike Lichte, Director of Regional Conveyance; Joey Vallarian, Director of Communications; and Alexis Meier, of E.Holding.

Ms. Clark explained the next phases of the Clean Water Plan and legal requirements under the federal consent decree. ALCOSAN has begun five major construction projects at the plant, including an additional wet well in order to increase the daily maximum treatment. The federal government requires ALCOSAN to build tunnels and pipes to bring the extra flows to the plant, and reduce overflows. The Allegheny River tunnel, which will serve O'Hara Township, will be built at a depth of 150 feet and all the tunnels will be 18' in diameter. The design will begin in 2025, followed by construction beginning in 2029. She further explained how the tunnel would be constructed.

Ms. Meier reviewed a packet of information provided to Council, noting a summary of the plan and the locations of the three legs of the tunnel system; timeline for the tunnel projects; and a diagram of how everything connects underground.

Ms. Kennedy explained ALCOSAN is preparing one Act 537 Special Study for all three tunnel legs, starting with the Ohio River tunnel in 2025. The last tunnel segment will be the Monongahela River to Sandcastle. The Act 537 Special Plan requires each municipality where facilities pass, to approve a resolution.

Ms. Clark noted the Township was provided the link to the study, which includes a fact sheet, comments and support, and a sample resolution. The Special Study will need to be released to the public by late spring of 2022. ALCOSAN will need the municipalities' resolutions by the end of 2021, and requested the Township to reach out to the community for comments.

Mr. Lichte stated the upper Allegheny River has seven overflows between Sharpsburg and Aspinwall. The tunnel will provide more capacity, reducing the amount of overflows while improving water quality. They have to come into compliance with water quality and get the sewage to the treatment plant. It was noted the cost to get rid of the combined sewer systems would cost a lot more.

Vice President Vogel questioned the type of rain event that would fill the tunnels to capacity. Mr. Lichte stated the system is designed for a typical year rain fall. The two-year and five-year storm events would vary depending on the type of system.

Ms. Eccles stated the concern is the Township has been getting more wet weather, and questioned if the system should be designed for more than typical rain fall. Mr. Lichte stated it is a sustainable facility and will offer benefits.

Ms. Clark noted funding sources for the projects.

Ms. Eccles noted ALCOSAN has implemented rate increases. Ms. Clark acknowledged for the past five years the rates have increased 7% each year.

Manager Jakubec stated the Special Act 537 Plan would need reviewed and suggested possible consideration of a resolution in January 2022. She indicated the email would be forwarded to the newly elected officials.

III. Citizen Comments Concerning Non-Agenda Items

No comments.

IV. Review and Discussion

A. Review of the Proposed 2022 Operating and Capital Budgets

Manager Jakubec stated the main purpose of the special workshop is to review the 2022 Proposed Operating and Capital Budgets. A Public Hearing to receive public comments concerning the proposed 2022 budget is scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on December 7th. The Public Hearing will be followed by a scheduled workshop and will include further review of the budget. The final adoption of the 2022 Township budget is scheduled to occur at the December 14th regular Council meeting. She noted the newly elected officials were also provided a copy of the proposed budget. The Manager added that the document was shared with the Treasurer and concerns were addressed.

President Smith questioned the 30% fund balance, which Manager Jakubec explained roads delayed in the Road Improvement Program last year will be done in 2022 to catch up along with other projects.

Mr. Denny, Jr. noted with the proposed projects the fund balance will decrease, which the Manager confirmed, adding she did not know by how much. She explained the budget could be amended in the spring by adding more projects. She also noted if a catastrophic event were to occur, some of the projects would not be done. With the COVID Pandemic, projections are difficult to presume.

Ms. Berger asked if any of the funds are in interest bearing accounts, which Manager Jakubec stated all funds are in interest bearing accounts except the escrow fund. Ms. Berger inquired about the interest rates. The Manager explained the new agreement with Dollar Bank guarantees a minimum interest rate.

Manager Jakubec stated no tax increases are proposed in the budget. She continued reviewing other sources of revenue, including grants, licenses, permits, fines, insurance refund.

The Manager noted a sewer rate study is proposed due to the recent sanitary sewer installations. The current sewer tap fee is \$3,300, which a study will determine if an increase is necessary. It was noted ten properties along Saxonburg Boulevard have not tapped in to the sanitary sewer.

Manager Jakubec noted the storm water utility fee was established in 2020 and everyone has to pay the fee in order to fund critical projects. An article explaining the purpose of the fee will be included in the Township Newsletter.

It was noted the Township has received \$460,742 through the American Rescue Plan and \$460,742 is expected to be received June 2022.

In reviewing expenses, Mr. Denny, Jr. noted salaries are split among several funds. President Smith questioned what fund(s) Mr. Komora's salary is paid from, which Manager Jakubec explained.

Manager Jakubec noted Jordan Tax Collection collects the LST and Real Estate Taxes; Keystone Collections Group collects the wage tax.

The Manager stated the Police Department consists of 14 Police Officers, one Sergeant, one Superintendent and the Secretary. Assistance for ambulance calls was limited due to COVID-19.

Mr. Denny, Jr. inquired about salary increases, which the Manager averaged at 3%.

Manager Jakubec stated the Township is served by one volunteer fire department and one company in addition to mutual aid with surrounding municipalities. The Township allocates \$25,000 for insurance on Parkview EMS vehicles. Mr. Denny, Jr. requested consideration of increasing the EMS stipend to \$30,000 for 2022, noting the ambulance is operated by full-time Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics, and there are more calls for emergency medical services. President Smith, Vice President Vogel and Ms. Berger agreed.

The Manager noted the Public Service Department is responsible for leaf collection, municipal building maintenance, snow removal, and also includes solid waste and recycling collection. Manager Jakubec stated the waste and recycling collection contract will go out to bid through the North Hills Council of Governments. She anticipated glass would no longer be accepted for recycling. Residents are not billed for waste collection, as it is included in taxes.

Mr. Denny, Jr. noted federal funding is available for transportation and energy, and suggested future consideration of installing solar panels on the municipal building. Manager Jakubec recalled prior discussion about electric vehicles, which could include the Parks truck and Public Service Superintendent's truck because they are not used for plowing snow. She would seek grants for electric vehicles.

The Manager stated the Township has a mechanic on staff for vehicle repairs. Since they have the JPRO System, vehicles should not need to go out for service. The Public Service Department is also involved with the road improvement program preparation and highway mowing.

It was noted the Township has six active parklets with play equipment. New play equipment was not installed due to COVID.

Mr. Denny, Jr. stated he reviewed the community center financials and the center is doing very well. He noted the Township has given \$120,000 for the community center for the last ten years. President Smith stated that is part of the original agreement. Ms. Berger added the original agreement also states "not to exceed."

Ms. Berger questioned how the library came to the number they have requested. Manager Jakubec recalled the library established a per capita and asked for half and gradually get to the whole amount. Ms. Eccles noted their per capita is \$5.00. Ms. Berger stated there is an agreement in place for a reason. O'Hara Township takes care of the community center, and Fox Chapel takes care of the library.

Ms. Bubas commented that she did not support funding the library, noting the library recently purchased an adjacent lot for \$350,000. If they have money to buy the lot, they do not need the Township's financial support. President Smith questioned the library's intentions for the lot.

Ms. Berger noted the budget includes \$20,000 for the library, and noted questions to be answered before agreeing to an allotment for the library. Ms. Berger noted the Township would be approached for the library's capital campaign, and recalled a prior request to finish the basement at a cost of \$1,000,000. She stated in comparing Cooper Siegel to the Sharpsburg branch, Cooper Siegel has a large, paid staff, and Sharpsburg does not. Manager Jakubec stated the full per capita would be \$44,460; and half would be \$22,230. Ms. Berger was not aware that the Library Association had purchased the adjacent lot. She questioned why Sharpsburg Library cannot be open all the time. Ms. Berger indicated she would be comfortable with allotting \$5,000 to the library, to which Mr. Stewart agreed, recalling comments during the library's presentation and noted a need for full disclosure.

Mr. Denny, Jr. indicated the points are well taken, but considered the library a regional asset. He agreed the Sharpsburg Library needs more help. He supported giving something; some or all to Sharpsburg Library. Mr. Denny, Jr. indicated he may not be in a position to decide tonight, but

hoped Council could make a decision in December to give more than \$5,000 but maybe not \$20,000. President Smith commented that the library staffs' salaries are high.

Manager Jakubec stated just because money is in the budget does not mean you have to write a check.

President Smith noted he did not understand Jill McConnell's answer that Tom Powers is not ready to hand over the documents. He recommended keeping the money in the budget as a place-holder and get some answers from the library.

Manager Jakubec requested Council to email their list of questions for her to forward to Ms. McConnell so she could provide answers for the December 7th workshop.

The Manager noted sanitary sewer expenditures relate to maintaining the sanitary sewer system and reducing overflows.

Manager Jakubec noted the Township has two pension plans; a Defined Benefit Plan and a Defined Contribution Plan, which is similar to a 401K Plan. The pension plans are fully funded.

The Manager stated capital improvements were determined based on the rating sheets Council completed. She added the Fox Chapel and Freeport Road ADA upgrades project to the budget. Blawnox Volunteer Fire Company houses and operates the Township's aerial engine, and breathing apparatus needs to be replaced. The Delafield Stream Removal Project was removed from the budget because it will not begin until 2023 or 2024. She recommended reevaluating projects and amending the budget if necessary in March or April 2022 based on the status of the COVID Pandemic.

Manager Jakubec noted additional line items and appendices included in the budget document. She requested the newly elected officials to contact her with any questions they may have.

President Smith commended staff for a nice job in putting the budget together.

V. Concerns of Council

No comments.

VI. Concerns of Staff

Manager Jakubec requested Council to remain after the special workshop to discuss labor matters.

VII. Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Denny, Jr. to adjourn the special workshop was seconded by Vice President Vogel and carried unanimously. The special workshop adjourned at 9:15 p.m. and Council entered into Executive Session.