

**MINUTES COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, OHIO
MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM | 828 2136 1150
MONDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2020**

Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan called the special meeting to order at 7:01p.m.

Roll Call:

Present: Mrs. Michele Weiss
Mrs. Sandra Berry
Mrs. Barbara Blankfeld
Mr. Phillip Ertel
Mr. Justin Gould
Mrs. Susan Pardee
Mr. John Rach

Also Present: Law Director Luke McConville
Clerk of Council Kelly Thomas
Finance Director Dennis Kennedy
Fire Chief Robert Perko
Police Chief Dustin Rogers
Service Director Jeffrey Pokorny
City Engineer Joseph Ciuni
Economic Developer Susan Drucker

Council Meeting September 21

There were no corrections to the September 21, 2020 Council minutes.

MOTION BY MRS. BLANKFELD, SECONDED BY MR. ERTEL for the passage of the September 21, 2020 Council Minutes as corrected. On roll call, all voted “aye.”

Comments from Audience

Mrs. Terry Durda, 14354 Washington Blvd. had the following questions: (1) who made the decision to hold the Heights for our lives protest in University Heights, because she believed it cost approx. \$14,000 or so; (2) is it possible to get a copy of the Police Reform report for University Heights; (3) has a decision been made regarding rubbish pickup; (4) has there been any discussion regarding the upcoming election for security and the policing on the community as a safeguard so that the city is not trashed; and (5) she hopes the City will still have Tick or Treat this year.

Mayor Brennan suggested that Mrs. Durda submit a public record request form for her questions so that her questions can be responded to. But noted that he as well as Council are opposed to allowing the city to be trashed. The Heights for our lives was something that the City worked with the organizers because they had their first amendment right to protest and the City respected that right. The organizers were very corporative in working with the city and meeting the city’s concerns for security. No incidents, property damage or issues resulted from the protest. Mayor Brennan informed Mrs. Durda that no decision has been made regarding rubbish collection and that Councilperson Justin Gould, Chair of the Service Committee held the first of a series of three public input forums regarding rubbish collection. In regards to the upcoming election, the Mayor stated he would be working with the City’s safety forces to consider all the different possibilities that could occur on Election Day. Tick or Treat will be held on October 31 from 6pm to 8pm.

Mayor’s Report

On October 1, Governor Mike DeWine signed House Bill 614 into law. This distributes an additional \$650 million to local governments across the state, including an estimated additional \$461,000 to University Heights. This, in addition to the money already received, takes our City’s total in CARES Act funds received to over \$1.1m.

You will recall that in June the City announced the furloughs and salary reductions of our administrative staff, including directors, chiefs, essentially, all full time non-union employees. The reduction was to equal one 80 hour paycheck over the course of 20 weeks – ten pays with the equivalent of 8 hours less pay per pay period, ending on October 31.

These furloughs and salary reductions were taken out of an abundance of caution. We were projecting as much as a \$2m shortfall. While tax revenues remain down from this point last year, for everything we have been through, we are down just 1% from this time last year. Rather than two million, we are down overall approximately \$250,000 from original projections. The \$1.06m in budget cuts we made in June more than cover that, though many of those things are expenses that were deferred, like the roads program. The actions we took in June did not contemplate the receipt of CARES Act money. We hoped for such funds, we could not assume we would receive them.

With the most recent guidance issued by the Treasury Department, our ability to use the CARES Act funds to restore municipal operations is now possible. After consulting with the vice mayor, our finance director and law director, effective with the pay period ending Oct 3, the furlough and salary reductions are ended, and the full salaries and wages of the affected employees are restored. Council members received an email this afternoon from the finance director: those of us elected officials who took a voluntary reduction need simply confirm to the finance director that you are waiving no further income from our positions.

What does this mean for the public? For one thing, municipal operations will be restored on Friday afternoons, beginning this Friday. While the buildings remain closed to the public due to COVID-19, we will be here working for you. But I assure you. Though the windows might have been dark and the calls going to voicemail, I witnessed how hard everyone worked to get everything done in the time that was allowed.

I have said on numerous occasions that the City's greatest asset are the people who work for it. The people who serve this community. It is people who get things done. The residents of this City deserve our best, and the dedicated men and women who work for University Heights deliver it. I am proud of the people who work for this City. I am proud of how gracefully our employees have worked through these trying circumstances, how they have risen to the occasion. I have asked our law director to review how we may go about restoring the income lost by the affected employees during the furlough. Our employees stuck with us, in good faith. And in good faith, we should be able restore what they gave up.

Mayor Brennan provided the report from the Department of Communications in Mr. Cooks absence. The US Census deadline has been extended to October 31, 2020. If you have not completed your 2020 census go to 2020census.gov to complete it. The Mosaic magazine will be out within the week and guidance for Halloween which will take place on October 31 from 6pm to 8pm will be listed inside. Mayor Brennan encouraged residents to find ways to provide candy to the children without the need of too much physical contact and remember to wear your protective masks. The City will be featuring University Heights homes with the best Halloween decorations on Facebook. Submit your home or the homes you like best by emailing pictures to info@universityheights.com or send the address to the city. The Halloween feature will be called "the City of Boo-tiful Homes."

Agenda Items:

- A) Motion to Extend the City's IT Service Contract with Starfish Computer Corp. from October 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020 in an amount not to exceed \$12,000**

Mayor Brennan stated that the Administration is committed to a process with the Tech Advisory Commission to seek bids for both having an entity come in and evaluate what the City has in terms of IT and what the City needs. The other bid would be for a company to implement the work that needs to be done. In the meantime, the City had a temporary contract for temporary services with Starfish until the end of September 2020. In order not to be without a contract with a company to provide the City IT services as a bridge until a more permanent arrangement has been finalized Mayor Brennan request that Council approve extending Starfish's IT Service Contract from October 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

Mrs. Blankfeld asked what the City had paid out to Starfish with the recently expired contract for comparison.

Mayor Brennan replied that he didn't have the exact figures but that this quote was in line with the previous quote.

MOTION BY MR. ERTEL, SECONDED BY MRS. BLANKFELD to Extend the City's IT Service Contract with Starfish Computer Corp. from October 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020 in an amount not to exceed \$12,000. On roll call, all voted "aye."

B) Motion to hold an Executive Session immediately following this Regular Meeting for the Purpose of Discussing Personnel, Legal and/or Real Estate Matters

Mayor Brennan reported that an executive session was needed in order to provide Council with an update on University Square and also an update on labor negotiations.

MOTION BY MR. ERTEL, SECONDED BY MRS. BLANKFELD to hold executive session order to provide Council with an update on University Square and an update on labor negotiations. On roll call, all voted “aye.”

Director’s Reports

Finance Director – Dennis Kennedy reported that the City was approximately 1.4% under last year’s cash basis or approximately \$116,000 and that he should have the final revenue reports done at weeks end. The City received payment was received from the County Auditor’s Office for the final distribution from property taxes and special assessments. In preparation for the 2021 budget the department heads have been asked to start gathering information. Legislation will be presented at the next Council meeting to appropriate the remainder of the CARES money to allow moving all the Covid expenses over to the Covid fund.

Law Department – Luke McConville stated that he received four (4) complaints from The Fair Housing Center Associate Director Kris Keniray for claims under the City’s Fair House Ordinance. The claims were sent by certified mail to the respondents and the process will begin to conduct the investigation and possibly convening the City’s Fair Housing Board. Mr. McConville noted that he would keep Council abreast to the status of the hearings.

Councilperson Gould asked Mayor Brennan if a resident has been appointed to the City’s Fair Housing Board in replacement of him. Mayor Brennan replied not yet, but he will do so soon.

Police Department – Chief Rogers reported that he would be coming to Council soon for the approval of the migration radio equipment with the approximation cost of \$120,000 with the understanding that the city would not be billed from the vendor until 2021.

Fire Department – Chief Perko stated that the department will begin to conduct physical agility testing in conjunction with John Carroll University and the Shaker Heights Fire Department. number of structure fires has increased 5% over the last years. With the help of University Hospitals, the department will also be conducting departmental cancer screenings for the members. Hydrant flushing will begin the week of October 13, 2020 for two weeks. Signs will be posted around the City. October is National Fire Prevention month and last year the department held an open house but with the pandemic this year the open house will be held virtually with various daily Facebook posting with fire safety tips, fire station virtual tours and training.

City Engineer – Joseph Ciuni reported that the Laurelhurst waterline replacement project completed its first water test with two more water sample test to complete and pass before the houses can be hookup to the line. It will take 5 to 6 days to hook up all 22 houses then the street will be repaired. Everything should be done by the last week of October.

There were no other director reports.

Standing Committees:

Community Outreach - Mrs. Pardee reported that the Tech Advisory Committee met on Sept. 24 at 6:30pm to finalize the RFP.

Economic Development Committee – Mr. Rach stated that the committee met and discussed: having a Small Business Assistance Program using CARES funding and Ordinance 2020-31 regarding meeting notifications. The committee will be meeting again for further discussion on the logistics of having a Small Business Assistance Program and Ordinance 2020-31.

Finance Committee - Mrs. Weiss reported that the October 27, 2020 meeting will be postponed to either the last week of November, 2020 or the first week of December, 2020.

Recreation Committee – Mr. Ertel stated that the committee would have a meeting on October 22, 2020 at 7pm to review events that can and cannot be held as well as the cost of those events.

Service Committee – Mr. Gould reported that the first of three public hearings regarding solid waste study was held on September 30, 2020 at 6pm via Zoom. Approximately 15 residents signed in and shared their views on how the city collect the rubbish and their hopes for the future. The next meetings for resident input will be later in October and November, 2020

Safety Committee – Mrs. Berry thanked the Citizens Advisory Committee will meet on the third Wednesday of the month.

There were no other committee reports.

MOTION BY MRS. BLANKFELD, SECONDED BY MR. RACH to return to regular session. On roll call, all voted “aye.”

MOTION BY MR. RACH, SECONDED BY MR. GOULD to adjourn the meeting. On roll call, all voted “aye.”

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:42p.m.

Michael Dylan Brennan, Mayor

Kelly M. Thomas, Clerk of Council