

**Rittman City Council Met in a
REGULAR MEETING
Monday, January 13, 2020
7:00 p.m.**

Members Present: Melissa Shows, Josh Carey, Dave Williams, Philip Decker, Leah Weirick and Amanda Nelson
Members Absent: None
Presiding: Mayor William Robertson

The invocation was given by Pastor Bud Olszewski followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes – December 2, 2019.

Williams moved to approved, all Yeas upon roll call and **motion carried.**

Citizens Forum

Richard Grudosky – 41 Willard Drive – Mr. Grudosky attended to inform Council that certain neighbors do not take care of their yards. Their leaves blow into his yard. The neighbors don't care, they blow their leaves into his yard. He just wanted Council and the Mayor to be aware. Maybe change property maintenance to include raking leaves and not let them lay all winter.

Old Business

None

New Business

a. **Motion to Approve a 2.25% Wage Increase for the Non-Union Employees, Including Part-Time Employees and the City Manager Effective January 13, 2020.** Weirick moved to approve, all Yeas and **motion carried.**

b. **Ord. No. 8152 An Ordinance of the Council of the City of Rittman, Wayne and Medina Counties and State of Ohio, Amending Section 991.01 General Regulations, of the Codified Ordinances. First Reading.** Ord. No. 8152 was read on first reading. Weirick moved to place on second. Williams inquired if this was a big problem? Feuerstein replied not yet. It is something that the Cemetery Board has asked for the last two years and we are finally able to put it in writing. We probably have other ways of doing it but it puts it clearly on there. I know sometimes when we try to assess property owners within the City for fines or whatever, usually the form requires us to state an ordinance number. This gives us the ability to point clearly and say this is the ordinance that we are citing to assess it. It just makes it a little bit cleaner, not only for Pam and myself but also the County Auditor. All Yeas on roll call and **motion carried.**

c. **Motion to Re-Appoint a Council Representative to the Recreation Center Board of Directors – Melissa Shows Currently Serves.** Williams moved to appoint Josh Carey, all Yeas on roll call and **motion carried.**

City Manager's Remarks

I sent my memo with the Agenda, looking to get some guidance on solar farm ideas. This is something that I have been working on for the last few months and was finally able to bring it to Council's attention. It is something that I know Village of Grafton has done in Lorain County as well as the City of Newcomerstown which I mentioned in the memo. I got to tour that. They have found it to be a great success. As I laid out in the memo that it's one of those where we spend right now about a \$110,000.00 to power the waste water treatment plant. With this it is pretty much cost neutral. The previous proposal had it where we paid an extra \$8,000.00 per year. I told them that didn't work. They came back and crunched the numbers and found an investor who is willing to do this. I think this could be a great opportunity. We have a lot of land that is unused due to the mining underneath for Morton Salt business, solar panels are light enough where they can be put on that land. So possibly in the future, if this is found to be successful this could be something that could utilize that land right now that may not be completely utilized. This is something that we have been working with them on and bring it to Council's attention to see if this is something that they wanted to press forward on and to see if this is a good opportunity. I'd be happy to answer any questions on that.

Williams stated that Newcomerstown, I've been to that community, it's a fairly small community. Feuerstein replied that it is about 3,500 – 4,000.

Williams inquired how they finance?

Feuerstein replies it was the same type of project, the same company that we are working with did that project. That's how I was able to find an invite down there to take a tour of it. What they do is, it's a power purchase agreement. You agree to purchase the power from them over a set amount of years, that helps pay back the cost of installation. There is no out of pocket money from the City to do this. You pay for it over time and as that agreement concludes the City then owns that power, the solar panels. Essentially outside of maintenance and repairs for the electricity to the waste water treatment over the course of that contract. So essentially as I see it you could either lease power for that time period or you could buy power over that time period, then you become the owner of it in the end. There is a few different Cities that are doing that, that's usually the route they go is the power purchase agreement because to pay for it up front, small cities can't do that, it's a huge capital cost. This would be a way to do it if we were interested in doing it. That's why I wanted to bring to Council's attention with my memo, something that I was working on the last few months. I think that it could a great opportunity.

Williams inquired if there was any potential with industrial growth that could be consideration to make Rittman more attractable for industry or commerce?

Feuerstein replied that he believes so. I know a lot of cities; I know Morton Salt had looked at it years ago. With them being a German owned company, obviously Germany is very interested in the solar energy and I know they were looking at it years ago so maybe this might be a way that if we do it successfully and show them, that might be something that generates talks. I know that Morton has reached out to me to talk a little bit about it, but I don't know where those conversations went. If we become familiar on it not only attracts companies here because they see that we're trying different things and trying to find new technology to do that. That might be a way to recruit businesses. We actually use land that right now is just kind of sitting vacant that we can't build anything on. This might be a way to utilize and create renewable energy.

Mayor Robertson inquired what kind of direction Feuerstein was looking for. Something tonight?

Feuerstein replied if we want to wait for the next meeting so you have time to digest the information and ask questions. I know the developer would be willing to answer any questions. That way the investor kind of knows if this is project that they can start putting the contract together and getting bids out for contractors to actually build solar panels. I told them that it was going to be this week when I actually presented to Council. I was waiting for the new Council to be seated and then present this information.

Carey replied that he believed Wadsworth was doing something similar to this.

Shows inquired what the time frame was to actually get it up and running.

Feuerstein replied that he was unsure. If Council is onboard then they can start going into more details. I didn't want them to go through all that work if it was all for naught. I was waiting on the guidance from the six of you.

Williams inquired if Feuerstein has any information that would say that this would put us in better light for possible future grants for the City by going solar or green power or anything like that?

Feuerstein replied that he would like to think so. I know this company works with a lot of different companies. They are based out of Illinois. So, they have a lot of tax incentives from the State of Illinois or New Jersey. The cities and companies that use their product are actually getting money back in the deal. Where as Ohio we don't have many incentives. My hope is that changes in the next few years. Hopefully that leads us to, if we try this now, we might be in the forefront and might give us some grants in the future. I think that, especially solar energy as you see, they now have roof tiles that can generate, they now have windmills that can generate. I think that's where it's going to go and I have to think that the state's going to catch up and provide the same kind of incentives as other states do. If not, it's going to be left behind. As you can see towns like Newcomerstown and Grafton and even Wadsworth are seeing the possibilities. It can be done in Northeast Ohio. Regardless of how much sun we think we get; it can be done. As technology continues to evolve it's going to be not a matter of if, it's when. I have to think the states going to recognize that and try to help cities move forward on it.

Williams stated that he thinks its to our advantage move forward. I think just to be a competitive city. I like the idea.

Feuerstein stated he would talk to them about a contract and with more details and present that at the next meeting.

Carey inquired was the potential 30-year savings of a million and a half dollars?

Feuerstein replied that I also see the benefit from a budget standpoint. Now we know every year this is exactly what it is. Believe me that helps with budgeting because we can stick that number in and not have to worry about going out for bid doing all that fun stuff with the market. I think even if we weren't worried the potential savings down the road, just the savings in the short term would be a positive thing.

Williams inquired if we would get an industry that would need to use our waste water plant and we needed to expand our waste water plant, therefore we would need expansion of power, would there be the capability to expand the solar field or expand whatever.

Feuerstein replied that for the site we have right now it's probably limited in size to just that area because of Fast Forming is right to the north of it. It could be done. If there's ways to do it I'm sure the company would be willing look at that if we get to that point. I guess that would be a good problem to have.

Williams stated that he wouldn't want to prohibit growth if we got locked into this solar panel and they say we need this much more capacity.

Feuerstein stated that he would work with Mike to find out growth of the waste water treatment plant, what that would look like. I know we had looked at that before when the company from Spain was looking at that site and we had to have additional growth. I'm not sure what that looks like, but I will do our due diligence. I wanted to get more firm numbers from them, they kind of wanted to see Council's reaction before doing the extra.

Mayor Robertson stated that we could always go back to buying off of the power company.

Feuerstein replied that he would move forward if that is the direction.

Mayor Robertson stated that there are a lot of heads nodding, (yes), so go with that.

Feuerstein replied thank you. And then the second point on the memo, I don't need an answer right now obviously, but what it appears like loan potential from OPWC for Sterling Avenue could be a possibility with zero percent. We can stretch it out over ten years, that way it's a little bit more feasible for the residents as well as it gives us a chance in our future capital budgets to possibly help subsidize the cost because Sterling Avenue is a thoroughfare that people use to and from different parts of the County. Usually street costs only go up. So, at some point we are going to have to do that street. I want to put that as a possibility that way in case they do call we can give them the ok. Usually what happens is they need an answer that week and we won't have Council until two weeks after that, and it complicates things. I at least wanted to put it on your radar, put the idea of what I had

thought in mind. I had discussed this idea with Pam before, but putting it out there that way we can have some guidance. That way when decisions do come up, we can make a quick decision. Instead of having it wait and have potentially other cities take that loan money that's available. I don't need an answer tonight, obviously, but by the next meeting would be nice. That way we have some guidance as to how we want to operate going forward on that project.

Williams inquired if we knew what the longevity of a road that is well traveled. I guess I am looking to see if a ten-year loan is the road going to need replaced before the ten years is up.

Feuerstein replied that the life expectancy from the engineering estimate from the application is about 17 ½ years close to 18 years. So there still would be life after that. We put an extra mesh layering down, that way it kind extends the life a little bit. It was a little more expensive but you get more life out of it. I thought that was important to put that in there.

Mayor Robertson inquired if you (Feuerstein) were going to come back to Council at some point with legislation or are you just looking for input over time?

Feuerstein replied input over time, that would generate an ordinance obviously to enter into the loan program with OPWC, but that way if they call or email and say we loan proceeds available would you like to turn this instead of a grant loan project into loan project? I can then give the ok or the City can give the ok to move forward on that.

Mayor Robertson stated you'd like Council to communicate with you?

Feuerstein replied next meeting. My typical thumbs up thumbs down, that way I know what guidance I can give OPWC.

Williams inquired if we had this planned in the Capital Budget?

Keener advised not in this form, not for the loan.

Feuerstein replied not as a loan, no. We were looking at a 50/50 grant and then local match. So, it was going to be about two hundred and some thousand for this share to meet that grant. But obviously when we didn't get the grant that freed up dollars then to move elsewhere for the capital budget.

Shows inquired what the assessment would be roughly for the residents?

Feuerstein replied that the whole project overall, I think was about \$553,000.00. So, five years we would owe \$53,000.00 per year divided among every property, based on frontage, along Sterling and a portion of Erie over a ten-year period. If the City wanted to subsidize say \$50,000.00 for year two, five and eight that would obviously reduce it to \$400,000.00 and then that would be spread across. A lot depends on frontage. We can get those numbers and kind of show you what the average property owner would pay on that street over that period of time.

Williams inquired if it would be wise to do it now while gas and petroleum prices are lower to get the estimate now.

Feuerstein replied obviously costs never typically go down, they always go up. The worry was if we waited another year and try for the OPWC Grant and we didn't get it then, then we keep pushing it down the road where this gives us the ability to do it and still help subsidize the cost for the property owners along Sterling because they do share that road with people that typically don't live there. That was kind of the thought process to Council, do we want to do it now or do we want to keep trying wait for a better cycle for OPWC knowing that there are other roads that we have to look at?

Carey stated it is not in the greatest shape.

Feuerstein replied no, it is an AMATS road so in the future it could be used for AMATS but that funding isn't available until 2024 or 2025, I didn't think that road was going to last until then. That's why I tried pushing it on the OPWC route this year and when we didn't get the approval for that, I'm keeping it in mind for a loan proceeds and it looks like we are probably two or three projects below where loans would be coming from. I think they have enough to cover it. I am hoping that that is what happens and basically just putting us in a good spot to take advantage of that. A zero percent loan is about as good as it gets.

Williams inquired if our street department have a prioritization of streets that, that these streets are the highest or does it go upon how heavily used they are? Is there an alga rhythm to it or anything like that?

Feuerstein replied we sit down every year and review the streets that we are looking at and figure out what streets are used the most, what complaints we are hearing the most. We review those roads and try to determine ok is this really in that bad of shape and then we put that on the priority list. Granted funding, that's why Sterling was the next road that we were looking at because we know it is in bad shape, we get the most complaints about it and that's why it became a priority for us.

Feuerstein stated he had one more thing, it's a little odd for me to be sharing but we were visited this last week by the Wayne County Dog Shelter. They have kind of broken away from the Humane Society of Wayne County, I'm not sure why the divide occurred, but they basically take dogs throughout the county and take care of them and try to find them better homes. They are having a Bark Ball on February 8, 2020 and it is a good cause. We have flyers in the office. It's a good cause and just trying to be a good partner with other entities in the county and trying to push that issue and let people know that there is a good cause out there. They would appreciate any support that people can give to them.

Feuerstein also stated that he has accepted a new position. I gave my notice on December 20th. I just wanted to say I appreciate the support and the guidance that I have received here. I am going to miss this place a lot. I built some great friendships here and I hope I have done at least a few things to possibly move the City forward. I just wanted to say thank you to all of you. That is all I have, I would happy to answer any questions anyone has.

Williams stated that what he hears most is where are we at with City Hall/Library and the Nature Park.

Feuerstein replied the City Hall/Library, we had a phone call on Thursday we are looking at the renderings. There are some concerns about the stairway ramp coming off of Main Street. We realized that that might be some maintenance issues going forward but there is also the concern of ADA Accessibility off of Main Street. If we want to make the City more walkable having an entrance or ability to enter the site from Main Street instead of having to go all away around would benefit. I think that they are working on that rendering to see what could be done to make it look a little bit better and less cost in the future. Also, they are working on a rendering for the entrance from the parking lot so you can kind of see what the vision is on that side. We are very close to getting to that 10% contingency.

Keener advised in four weeks we will have estimated costs and then at that point we'll go to market and get rated. Once we get rated, we'll be able to issue that.

Feuerstein replied so close and moving forward on it. I know the library is excited as we are to try to get this project going. We are pushing ahead and hopefully by April – May we will have some construction documents, at least financing.

Mayor Robertson stated that he thinks the library's next step is to get the renderings so they can go out the public to try to get donations and financial support so that we have a buy in on the project.

Feuerstein stated that they will be waiting on that for the 10% contingency as well. Because that way they know what their target is. A lot of it has been hinging on that 10% contingency. Once we get to that point you are going to see things move a lot faster. It's a process but we are working through it. This past year we probably have done a lot more in these last four months than we had previously.

Feuerstein stated to answer your question for the Rittman Nature Preserve. I am one document away from trying to be able to finally close on that property. We had to do an appraisal review because the amount that we are inquiring the property for is less than the value of the property. That difference is what we are using as our match, our local share for the OPWC funding. That's why we need an appraisal review to review the appraisal to make sure that we are correct in our funding level. Once we achieve that we will submit that to the State, they have everything, they are waiting for us on that one document. Once I have that we can push forward and get that acquired and then we can do the fun stuff of planning and plotting how we want to set up park. I am hoping by the end of the month we have that acquired and we'll be moving forward on that.

Finance Director's Remarks

Keener stated she wanted to advise year end there was a carryover of 4.3 million dollars. We had projected a 3.2-million-dollar carryover, so I am quite pleased with that. We had 1.1 million extra carryover.

a. Approval of Financial Report for November, 2019. Weirick moved to approve, on roll call Decker – Yes, Weirick – Yes, Nelson – Abstain, Williams – Yes, Shows – Yes, Carey - Yes and **motion carried.**

b. Approval of Financial Report for December, 2019. Williams moved to approve, on roll call Decker – Yes, Weirick – Yes, Nelson – Abstain, Williams – Yes, Shows – Yes, Carey - Yes and **motion carried.**

Council Remarks

Carey – thank everyone for coming out today and thank Derek for his service while he was here and the work that you did and a lot of the research and things that you did before you brought things to us. You made it a lot easier for us to navigate through things with your memos and kind of explain what you were thinking when you were doing it. So, thank you and I wish you the best of luck.

Williams – echo the same thing Josh said about Derek. Thank you for moving our City forward and being progressive in your thinking with solar power and going after grants and being creative on how you approached different pieces. I wish the best of luck to you on your new job. Welcome Amanda to Council. This week I had a chance to ride with Officer Scott Ries around the community to talk about property maintenance issues. What I found was this guy's doing a lot work. He is building cases to present to the County Prosecutor and the Prosecutor is not taking the cases. I guess I would like to propose that we as Council or somebody pen a letter asking the Prosecutor to reconsider some of our cases. To see if we could meet with him or something like that. I just feel like we're doing a lot of work and the citizens complain a lot about the property maintenance, but yet we are doing everything on our side, Rittman, and it seems like things are falling short at the County level and I think we need to take care of the community and we need to address these problems. There are houses with people living without running water or electricity. There are some real safety concerns around town. We need to take pride. Like Mr. Grudosky said about everybody needs to take care of their properties. That's just to me common sense that we take pride in the community. I think that somehow if we could come together as team and approach the County and see if we can make a difference that way. At least get in front a Judge on some of these cases. We are not even getting as far as getting past the Prosecutor reading it and saying we don't have a case. I think we are doing good work, so that's my two cents about that. We are a new Council and we are all fairly young and we are here to stay and we need to take care of things. Mayor Robertson stated if we can get the Prosecutor to meet with us to tell us what it would take, what are they looking for in order for it to get past their desk anyhow.

Nelson – I just wanted to thank everybody here and the citizens for finally getting me up here. Derek, I didn't get to work with you very much but what I did was always good ideas and all that stuff. I wanted to congratulate fire and EMS today for their STEMI Award again. Second one in 10 months. Congratulations you guys, you do a good job.

Shows – I had the same thing, I wanted to congratulate the Chief and his crew. I know the work that goes into that and how important the timing is, probably more than most people in the room, so I'm very grateful to see to that working to our advantage and them getting that, even with dispatch being gone. Again Derek, thank you so much for all that you have done, again I didn't get to work with you very much but was looking forward to that and appreciate all that you have done for the City.

Decker – thank you everyone for being here this evening. And Derek thank you for your time and the talks that we have had and the effort that you have put in to all the work that you have done around town and that you even in this meeting are still referring to Rittman as a we because you are still here. Thank you.

Weirick – I just want to thank Derek for everything that he has done, it has been a pleasure.

Mayor Robertson – I wanted to say that I have enjoyed working with Derek and what I had wished for is that he could have seen a couple of the really good projects come to fruition, like the new City Hall/Library or the park or whatever. He has laid some great groundwork and is still laying some more with the potential solar field and some other long-term planning. Road grants for 2024 so you can be thinking about us years from now. I appreciate the effort.

a. **Approval of Voucher #'s 11016 thru 11692 and Memo Expense #'s M#1114 thru MD1917.** Weirick moved to approve, on roll call Decker – Yes, Weirick – Yes, Nelson – Abstain, Williams – Yes, Shows – Yes, Carey - Yes and **motion carried.**

b. **Motion to go into Executive Session to Discuss Personnel Matters and Invite the City Manager, Law Director and Mayor and Finance Director – 7:38 p.m.** Williams moved to approve, all Yeas on roll call and motion carried.

c. **Motion to Come out of Executive Session – 8:50 p.m.** Williams moved to approve all Yeas on roll call and motion carried.

Adjourn: - 8:51 p.m. Weirick moved to adjourn, all Yeas on roll call and **motion carried.**

Mayor

Clerk of Council