

Village of Gates Mills
MINUTES OF A SPECIALWORKSHOP MEETING OF COUNCIL
September 18, 2020

A special workshop meeting of the Council of the Village of Gates Mills, Ohio was held on Friday, September 18, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. with Mayor Schneider presiding in the Community House located at 1460 Chagrin River Road, Gates Mills, Ohio.

Councilmembers present: AuWerter, Frankel, Reynolds, Sogg, Turner, Whitney (via phone).

Also present were Chief Minichello, Finance Administrator Mulh, Treasurer Reynolds, and resident David Atton.

Councilmember Reynolds moved to excuse Councilmember Welsh. Councilmember Sogg seconded the motion.

Roll call: Ayes: AuWerter, Frankel, Reynolds, Sogg, Turner, Whitney.
 Nays: None.
 Motion carried.

Treasurer Reynolds stated the purpose of the meeting is to review the ideas generated by the Long Range Financial Planning Committee. Administrative actions and legislative actions will not take place today, but would occur at a regular meeting of Council. Today we will discuss the opportunities and actions to implement. A positive consensus regarding an idea will be put into the Long Range Financial Forecast. We will have a hard stop at 3:00 p.m. and unfinished business will be taken up at Council's Special meeting scheduled for next Friday, September 25, 2020 at 1:00 p.m.

The summary of findings of the Shared Services Subcommittee will be reviewed first. The Subcommittee did not find any feasible or realistic opportunities to share services at this time. The Subcommittee reviewed expenses for the Village as well. The Police Department's overtime and part-time expense was discussed. Could restricting vacation time to the summer months help reduce overtime and part-time hours? Councilmember AuWerter noted our income statement shows our overtime cost; however, compensatory time can be banked and used later. Comp time hours taken are implicitly a part of overtime. Councilmember Frankel asked if one hour of overtime is equal to one and one-half hours of comp time. Mrs. Mulh confirmed. Councilmember Reynolds asked for the average amount of comp time. The maximum number of hours that can be in one's bank is eighty hours. Mayor Schneider asked Chief Minichello to speak to overtime with respect to holiday hours. Chief Minichello stated \$15,000 of the overtime budget is for holiday usage. An officer may use holiday hours on a holiday but then work the day for overtime. This leaves \$30,000 for paid out overtime during the year. Councilmember AuWerter clarified that if in week 1 an officer works 40 hours and in week 2 there is a holiday and the officer takes 12 holiday hours, they would get 12 hours of overtime. Treasurer Reynolds asked Chief Minichello if he feels actions need to be taken to reduce overtime. Chief Minichello replied that everything is predicated on part-time staff availability. Typically, part-time officers have other full-time jobs though. Councilmember Turner asked if

there are any savings from encouraging comp time versus overtime? Chief Minichello noted that part-time officers don't typically work the holidays, but could be enticed if they were to be paid time and a half. He stated that he worked part-time for Chardon for years, but didn't get guaranteed hours. Mayfield Village guarantees 28 hours per week. We can't guarantee a certain number of hours. Treasurer Reynolds asked if savings could be realized by restricting vacation to certain times of the year. Chief Minichello responded that it would be a challenge as the School Resource Officer takes vacation during the summer months when there is no school and also has training requirements to meet. Therefore, the SRO is available 5-6 weeks to cover shifts. There are 2,000 hours to cover in a year just with vacation and holidays. Treasurer Reynolds asked Chief Minichello if he is comfortable with the overtime estimate that is in the long range projection. The Chief said he is. Chief Minichello stated the overtime amount is a flat amount over the years, which is some ways is a reduction. He would not be comfortable with an amount under \$40,000 as there are so many things that are unforeseen. Councilmember AuWerter stated we have one more officer than the prior 5 years and going forward it would seem logical that with one extra body, part-time and overtime hours would be reduced. Chief Minichello noted the last five years have not been normal years. It has been topsy-turvy for five years. Councilmember Sogg stated it might make sense to have a permanent part-time officer and guarantee hours. Chief Minichello replied it would depend on who that officer is. Officer Planinsek was a huge loss for us. He recently retired, but was very open to all hours. Treasurer Reynolds stated he is hearing no leeway to adjust the projection for overtime. Council is sensitive to this issue but there is no specific action plan at the moment. This is a management issue that will also come up at budget time. Councilmember Reynolds agreed with looking at Councilmember Sogg's suggestion of a permanent part-time member. Councilmember Whitney's comment on the issue, read by Mayor Schneider, is that restricting vacation time to a time of year is not something she supports. At this time Chief Minichello exited the meeting.

Treasurer Reynolds moved on to the Fire Department portion of the Shared Services Subcommittee findings. It was noted that outsourcing fire service is too expensive. Councilmember AuWerter noted that officers are only paid when called out. Councilmember Reynolds confirmed that officers are paid on a per call basis. Treasurer Reynolds said that EMS services will continue to be monitored and alternatives to Mayfield Village reviewed. We are seeing a significant increase in the contract with Mayfield Village. Mayor Schneider noted the cost is \$2,000 per run. A multi-person run will be \$250 for each additional person versus \$2,000 each. The billing company can invoice our residents separately and they will increase the amount billed to insurances for the run and mileage. Service Director Biggert entered the meeting at 1:38 p.m. There will be a meeting with Life Force Management, the billing company, to discuss what to do going forward. This topic will be discussed at the upcoming Safety Committee meeting in October. Councilmember Reynolds noted we will face this contract negotiation again in three years, so we need to be forward thinking and consider what alternatives there are. Councilmember Sogg inquired if private contractors provide the service. Mayor Schneider responded it was looked into.

Treasurer Reynolds read the dispatch portion of the Shared Services report. It was noted that our fee is more than other communities. The fee structure may be disadvantageous at this time. There should be a comprehensive analysis done with a possible renegotiation of the fee structure. No council action is needed to accomplish this. Mayor Schneider added that Chagrin

Valley Dispatch is going to be reviewing the fee structure and the effort will be led by the Mayor from Bentleyville. Councilmember Sogg offered to take ownership of following up. It was suggested that knowing our billable versus nonbillable calls would be helpful.

Treasurer Reynolds moved on to the Service Department section of the report. Councilmember AuWerter stated he was optimistic about sharing services with another community. However, after meeting with that community, they said they didn't need to waste time doing any sharing. Geography is also an issue with sharing services. Treasurer Reynolds stated that regionalization has been mostly hot air. Councilmember Sogg noted there is an accountability issue with regionalization as well. The County is terrible about coming around to look at roads. We have to call them in to show them when there is a problem. Councilmember AuWerter discussed overtime for the department. It is heavier during the winter months during snowfalls. Two rotating shifts could be used during the winter months. He also mentioned the possibility of using part-time drivers for snow plowing. He stated the graphs in the report amplify comp and overtime hours. Councilmember Sogg asked if the communities using shifts and part-time drivers are comparable to the Village. It was noted the other community has a smaller staff and much less road miles. Councilmember Frankel stated there is a staffing issue as the Service Department members also serve as firefighters during the daytime. Councilmember AuWerter proposed shifts from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. There would be a gap from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. Service Director Biggert stated we are not going to save in overtime with shifts. Given the daily tasks, we need people here during the day. In March of this year, we tried shifts to keep everyone isolated during the pandemic. It was terribly inefficient. With sick, vacation and holiday time, he had to call in others for overtime. Overtime is only incurred on an as needed basis. A fire call requires 4 people in the engine and you have to have the manpower available whether there is a call or not. Councilmember Turner stated that COVID and the flu do make staffing harder. Councilmember AuWerter said there are 8 people working 8-hour days. When there is a snowfall, four trucks go on the road. Service Director Biggert said that seven trucks often go out and then there are sidewalks to do. There are 4 large trucks, 4 medium trucks and a pick-up truck. Councilmember AuWerter asked if part-time help would work. Service Director Biggert responded they tried a reserve of personnel years ago, but the problem was that you couldn't guarantee them hours. Therefore, when you called them, they would have other work or couldn't come in. It's also hard to have other people using your valuable equipment. Treasurer Reynolds said Council is sensitive to the overtime issue and to continue to monitor it. Service Director Biggert said there are ways to trim overtime, but it will cut the level of service provided. Councilmember Whitney's statement was read by Mayor Schneider. She stated shifts would diminish service levels more than help efficiency. Mayor Schneider added that the data used is not the best as far as what is recorded on a timesheet.

Councilmember AuWerter stated the headcount in the Service Department suggests a possible FTE reduction. He stated the average annual cost is \$430k to maintain the buildings. The average per person cost is \$85-90k. Service Director Biggert noted there are 13 buildings. Mayor Schneider stated that as leases come due, the maintenance amounts will be revisited. At the moment there are no leases coming up. Councilmember AuWerter referred to his colored chart in the report and it shows that work is expanded to fill time. He interviewed other Service Departments and asked how they know if they have enough people. He was told it depends on the level of service the community wants. This was the only opportunity his team could find. Councilmember Sogg stated, since she started on Council, the Department has

already been reduced by two full-time employees through attrition. She would worry about the staffing during the winter months and noted there is a tension between maximum efficiency and level of service. She stated she is puzzled by what level of efficiency the Subcommittee is looking for and what level of service the residents want. People want the services they are getting. Councilmember Reynolds said a work order and approval process may be good. Service Director Biggert responded they already do that. Mayor Schneider stated that we have been working to get our Service Department to a lean machine since Mayor Broome's days. The Village embraced getting the downtown area to where we would have control of it. The Service Department takes care of everything. We would not have the Mills Building without the wastewater treatment plant. We have cut staff and part-time and she thinks 8 full-time members of the department is the perfect number. She would only try reducing the department if someone retired. Yesterday, she saw the department crack sealing roads. Two people were directing traffic and two people were moving the truck and crack sealing. The fire truck does come into play and we have to have it staffed. Our department adjusts to be there for the needs of the community. We have a talented staff and they do so many things in-house. Service Director Biggert understood that his marching orders were to do as much in-house as we can. Mayor Schneider agreed that was the plan instead of contracting out jobs. The staff is doing the painting in the Community House and we couldn't afford to do it otherwise. If we want to cut back, the Improvement Society would lose out for the parade and Christmas Eve, etc. She continued by saying the staff works hard and you are going to find out, only when someone leaves, that eight is the best number. Councilmember Whitney, through Mayor Schneider, stated she is opposed to reducing the headcount in the Service Department. Our Service Department sets us apart from others and we may have to ask them to do more as we control expenses better in-house. Mayor Schneider added that storms have been rough on culverts and clean ups have been many this year. Councilmember AuWerter said this Subcommittee was responsible for looking at the expense structure of the Village and he put his work hat on. We are looking at a tax increase but there are potentially some expense reductions. He is simply trying to point out the only tradeoff that could be balanced. Councilmember Turner said she really respects Councilmember AuWerter's effort and he brings a lot of knowledge to Council. She added that she agrees that this is not where we want to go with the Service Department and it is better to look at other areas. Councilmember Reynolds said there was a fascinating article on the front page of The Wall Street Journal today about hospitals encountering problems after cutting staff. She said it is a slippery slope when cutting staff is the quick fix. Treasurer Reynolds stated a big point of this exercise was to really scrub down our operations and identify ways to increase revenue or cut costs while providing the service level we want and being efficient. If we didn't do this, we would not be able to go to the residents and ask for money. He commended Councilmember AuWerter as he has done the digging. Treasurer Reynolds said he does not hear a consensus that a reduction in staff is warranted. Overtime will continue to be monitored. Councilmember Frankel added that Councilmember AuWerter provided a framework, and the barometer will be when voters are asked.

Treasurer Reynolds read the Shared Services Subcommittee findings about the wastewater treatment plant. A private contractor has quoted much less than the County's \$190k per year. Further investigation is taking place. This is largely a management action with a contract for Council to approve. Service Director Biggert stated AKE Environmental does management services for wastewater treatment plants and quoted \$26,000 for everyday testing (Monday through Friday). There is no penalty with the County to switch. Councilmember

Frankel stated the Village's facility has a staffing requirement of 2 days per week. For the other three days, we would train Service Department staff to be able to check the plant. Weekend days are not checked. Councilmember AuWerter asked if \$30k should be plugged into the Long Range Forecast for the service. Treasurer Reynolds asked when the service would start, 2021? Service Director Biggert said yes. Councilmember AuWerter stated Moreland Hills typically has \$10k per year in additional work for their plant. The County has stated our facility is relatively old. Service Director Biggert said we can use \$35,000 per year for the Long Range Forecast. Councilmember Turner said Village Engineer Courtney weighed in about the life of the plant and said it is hard to tell. Treasurer Reynolds noted Service Director Biggert will move forward with the project. Councilmember AuWerter said we need to make sure we can get out of the County agreement. Service Director Biggert said we still use them to operate five pump stations within the Village, which is paid by the users frontage assessments. Councilmember Turner exited the meeting at 2:49 p.m.

Treasurer Reynolds stated we will finish Shared Services and do Fees, Fines and Other Revenue along with Taxation at next Friday's meeting. Councilmember AuWerter stated that Village Engineer Courtney looked at the roads and put in a provision for mill and fill and repair. Councilmember Sogg said it appears we are adding \$200-225k to our current amount. Treasurer Reynolds stated we will take it up next week.

There being no further business, the council meeting adjourned at 2:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Janet M. Mulh, Finance Administrator

Approved:



Karen E. Schneider, Mayor