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# Ashland City Council

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## MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR SESSION OF COUNCIL

January 4, 2005

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Council President Greg Gorrell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

### ROLL CALL

Ward 1:	Bob Valentine	Present
Ward 2:	Greg Gorrell	Present
Ward 3:	Ruth Detrow	Present
Ward 4:	Paul Wertz	Present
At-large:	Glen Stewart	Present

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

### PRESENTATION OF MINUTES

No minutes were presented for approval.

### COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

#### (a) **Members of Firefighters Union; questions/discussion on City finances:**

Brian Stichler, President of local firefighters union:

Stichler asked if Council members were aware of a letter of agreement from the City given to firefighters on Friday afternoon and that the contents were considerably different than what was talked about at the work session. Gorrell responded that in various meetings, the request to unions was changed to reflect a freeze on base pay only, and Council is aware of the general provisions though not involved in any way with negotiations. He stated he understood decisions were made by many of the bargaining units today.

Rob McCrae, firefighter:

McCrae asked what was the intent of breaching the original request of the pay rate freeze and presenting an agreement that obviously the firefighters union would not accept. The items in the agreement are completely opposite of what they originally talked about, and he outlined the items:

1. Originally, freeze and quarterly review for 2005: new agreement says 2005 and 2006; union agrees to forego wage rate increases for the first quarter of 2005.
2. City has right to determine work hours but not limited to implementing flex times, schedules and establishing reduced work week hours.
3. City will conduct quarterly budget reviews for the calendar years 2005 and 2006.
4. In consideration of the above items and union concession, the City agrees not to lay off any current bargaining unit employee during the first quarter of 2005.
5. Either party may request economic re-openers for the second quarter of 2005 and for every quarter thereafter through the year 2006.

6. City has the right to lay off employees for lack of funds after the first quarter of 2005, in the event the parties are unable to reach agreement in the event of economic difficulties.
7. Neither party nor any individual employee shall file any grievance or administrative claim regarding any issue set forth in this agreement.
8. This agreement shall become contractual for years 2005 and 2006.

It seems apparent to the firefighters that this is a lot different than what was originally talked about, and he wondered what was the intent behind the changes.

Mayor Strine stated the intent of the document was to clarify what was discussed, to put it in writing; he didn't hear anything that was contrary to discussions. Stichler stated they never discussed the loss of any rights to grieve by a party or individual; they had not discussed implementing flextime schedules or reduced work week hours; they had not discussed extending this from 2005 to 2006. Of the eight items, those were the main ones they were concerned about.

Gorrell outlined the process of the requested concessions/allowances as he understood them and emphasized that Council would ultimately make decisions on the recommendations the administration makes as to what must be done to make the budget work. Speaking only for himself, his sense is that if the bargaining units take a freeze, it stays potential layoffs; if the bargaining units don't take a freeze, then layoffs could happen sooner than the first quarter. The Mayor and division directors will ultimately come back with what the cuts have to be, and putting this in writing hopefully clarifies what has to be.

Gorrell emphasized everyone has to make decisions they feel they have to make, but at the end of the day the budget has to be balanced. If what he is hearing is correct, his sense is that staff reductions will have to be made, though he doesn't know what those are at this point; he doesn't know how and who will be affected, but with information coming now, reductions will have to be considered. The long-term solution is to have revenues through economic growth and development bring that back, and he hopes that is sooner as opposed to later.

More discussion/questions:

- Mark Miller, firefighter: asked what percentage Ashland receives from the Undivided Local Government Fund (contractual with the county); their information states that is currently at 18%; their research of comparable cities shows other cities receiving a range of 35+%. Boyd: City currently receives about \$650,000 a year but doesn't know what percentage that is; it comes from the state and is divided among cities, counties and townships. Valentine: stated that amount is not negotiable. Mayor Strine: suggested they talk to the county auditor for more information about that.
- Stichler: firefighters are working with a CPA from Columbus who has done some evaluation of City finances; she has ideas how to increase revenues without any cost to the taxpayers and would be interested in talking to City administration. Mayor Strine: said he would sit down with her to talk; she should contact him to set something up. Gorrell: could talk to administration or Council or participate in a work session with all of them.
- Doug Hootman, firefighter: asked about interest earned on City funds, where does it go; could it go into general fund. Mayor Strine: into capital improvement fund 405; only about \$79,000 balance now; is needed in that fund. City has been moving money for several years from other funds to general fund to continue services; continuing to do that would eventually leave the City with no money anywhere. He restated that he would be happy to sit

down with any of them to go over figures. Gorrell also emphasized that a lot of money had already been shifted.

Holly Pearson, resident of Ashland and local business owner:

Pearson expressed concern about the City layoffs, primarily the fire department, and she asked several questions.

- Pearson: how many active firefighters are there on staff right now. Chief Burgess: 37 total.
- Pearson; how many were laid off. Chief Burgess: 19 volunteers.
- Pearson: can still use the ladder truck? Chief Burgess: Yes; it won't go on initial response right now, but it could be summoned.
- Pearson: what if there were two fires; could they be handled? Chief Burgess: as it was before or this year; if the staff is enough, the department will handle it; if not, they will need mutual aid.
- Pearson: multiple call numbers/statistics given to her. Chief Burgess: those numbers are logged; often are squad and fire; not often two fires.

Pearson told Council that she and other business owners do not want to be without protection; also it will raise their insurance rates. But all money aside, value can't be put on human life, and protection is a real necessity.

## LEGISLATION

### Ord. 1-05

Item (a) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE MAYOR, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SERVICE, TO ENTER INTO A MODIFICATION OF THE BANEY ROAD HYDRO-PILLAR WATER TANK IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT – L. C. UNITED PAINTING COMPANY CONTRACT AUTHORIZED BY ORDINANCE NO. 36-04; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Moved by Wertz and seconded by Stewart to invoke Section 113.01 of the Codified Ordinances as the distribution of this Ordinance has satisfied the requirements of said Section and that a further reading be dispensed with at this time.

Ayes: Valentine, Gorrell, Detrow, Wertz, Stewart

### Comments:

City Engineer Jim Cooper explained that this is a request for a final change order for an area that wasn't included in the original contract. Since the contractor was there, the consultants recommended that this be done; they got some estimates and felt that this was a good estimate; and they recommended that this area be fixed. That has been done since the contractor and equipment were there. Engineer's estimate on this original painting contract was \$325,000; the change order was \$3,200.

Stewart clarified that this is still under the original estimate, and the additional work was done; the cost comes out of water funds and not the general fund. Cooper affirmed that.

Moved by Stewart and seconded by Valentine that the Ordinance be passed on the first reading.

Ayes: Valentine, Gorrell, Detrow, Wertz, Stewart

Moved by Wertz and seconded by Detrow that the rules requiring the reading on three separate days be suspended and that the Ordinance be passed on the second and third readings.

Ayes: Valentine, Gorrell, Detrow, Wertz, Stewart

Moved by Detrow and seconded by Valentine that the Ordinance be passed.

Ayes: Valentine, Gorrell, Detrow, Wertz, Stewart

Motion carried.

**Res. 1-05**

Item (b) A RESOLUTION **RATIFYING THE ASHLAND COUNTY SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN**, AS REQUIRED BY SECTION 3734.55 OF THE OHIO REVISED CODE OF THE STATE OF OHIO; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Moved by Wertz and seconded by Stewart to invoke Section 113.01 of the Codified Ordinances as the distribution of this Resolution has satisfied the requirements of said Section and that a further reading be dispensed with at this time.

Ayes: Valentine, Gorrell, Detrow, Wertz, Stewart

Comments:

Mayor Strine stated this is pretty much keeping things status quo as far as the solid waste management plan goes. It needs to be approved if Council wants to continue the solid waste management program, and he recommends that Council approve this. Valentine pointed out that this is a requirement from the EPA.

Moved by Gorrell and seconded by Valentine that the Resolution be passed on the first reading.

Ayes: Valentine, Gorrell, Detrow, Wertz, Stewart

Moved by Wertz and seconded by Stewart that the rules requiring the reading on three separate days be suspended and that the Resolution be passed on the second and third readings.

Ayes: Valentine, Gorrell, Detrow, Wertz, Stewart

Moved by Valentine and seconded by Wertz that the Resolution be passed.

Ayes: Valentine, Gorrell, Detrow, Wertz, Stewart

Motion carried.

**Res. 2-05**

Item (c) A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THAT THE CITY OF ASHLAND MAKE APPLICATION FOR A **GRANT** FROM THE **AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB** TO PURCHASE EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY.

Moved by Wertz and seconded by Stewart to invoke Section 113.01 of the Codified Ordinances as the distribution of this Resolution has satisfied the requirements of said Section and that a further reading be dispensed with at this time.

Ayes: Valentine, Gorrell, Detrow, Wertz, Stewart

Comments:

Chief Miracle explained that this is a grant in the amount of \$5,000 from the American Kennel Club for training equipment; it will be used for the department's two current K-9 units that are on patrol now. It will be used for training sleeves, an insert

for the vehicle transporting the K-9 while on duty, a sensor unit for each vehicle to control heat, and one week of in-service training with a master dog trainer. There are no matching funds required, and Miracle requested approval, since this is money that would ordinarily come out of the department's budget for use for equipment and training.

Moved by Stewart and seconded by Valentine that the Resolution be passed on the first reading.

Ayes: Valentine, Gorrell, Detrow, Wertz, Stewart

Moved by Wertz and seconded by Detrow that the rules requiring the reading on three separate days be suspended and that the Resolution be passed on the second and third readings.

Ayes: Valentine, Gorrell, Detrow, Wertz, Stewart

Moved by Detrow and seconded by Gorrell that the Resolution be passed.

Ayes: Valentine, Gorrell, Detrow, Wertz, Stewart

Motion carried.

## WARD REPORTS

**Ward 1:** Bob Valentine

*(a) Snow calls:*

Valentine reported several calls concerning snow and some areas of concern, but eventually everything was taken care of. The City is very fortunate the way they were handled.

**Ward 3:** Ruth Detrow

*(a) Possibility of safety levy:*

Detrow reminded Council that several comments were made to her and reported by her at the last meeting that the City needs to have a money issue for police and fire. Since that last meeting and this meeting, business people and others saying the same thing have approached her. She feels that if something like that is ever going to have a chance, it will have to originate with the people of Ashland, and if they really want it, they can make it go.

It is possible by City Charter for a citizen to start an initiative petition, and she offered to meet with anyone who wanted to find out the procedure for doing so. She would work with them and with the City Law Director to be sure the requirements were met.

**At-Large:** Glen Stewart

*(a) Snow calls:*

Stewart also had calls about snow; he was around town a great deal, and certainly there were streets that were very difficult to drive over. But it was an extremely large snowfall with rain, freezing snow and the whole bit, and compared to other communities, Ashland fared pretty darn well. He felt he had to say that the street department and others in the community did a great job getting the City back on the road pretty fast, and he expressed pleasure at that.

*(b) Power poles, Sandusky Street:*

Stewart asked the Mayor about power poles on Sandusky Street where it appears that the lines have been removed from the replaced poles except for the last one on the west end, which still has cable attached to it. There are other areas around town where the meters have been removed but the cable company still has

equipment attached. This is an ongoing request from a few citizens and him. Ohio Edison was going to take a look at this, but he hasn't had more information on it.

Mayor Strine said normally Ohio Edison policy is that they remove their lines and put them on their new poles. The replaced pole stays there for other users to get their lines removed, so those others have created this problem. Ohio Edison has told him that they will take out those empty poles on Sandusky Street.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS: None

### MAYOR'S COMMENTS

*(a) Work session scheduled:*

Mayor Strine reminded Council of a work session January 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. to discuss Certified Local Government. Detrow emphasized that anyone with an interest in Certified Local Government should come to the meeting. Also, she had word from Patrick Overton who is working with the Arts Center and a plan for downtown, and at Ruth's suggestion he is going to attend the meeting. He will be here attending another meeting with the Arts Center, which is also why the request for the 6:30 p.m. time.

*(b) Bargaining units response to City finances:*

Mayor Strine told Council that the bargaining units declined various aspects of the City's proposal, and therefore the City will move forward with departmental reductions. He was hopeful the bargaining units would support the suggested wage freezes thereby eliminating the need for layoffs as long as possible. Though this economic downturn has hit the general fund the hardest, it has also affected nearly every service of the City, and in dealing with reductions in service, it will most likely affect all the services throughout the City, not just the Police and Fire Departments. It will affect the Police and Fire Departments because they are obviously the largest expenditures in the general fund, but it will also affect other divisions within the general fund. The only answer he knows to this problem is for the economy to turn around, and he feels confident it is turning around, seeing some of the things happening in the community.

This was the Mayor's update on this to Council to let them know that within the next day or so the administration will be working on where those reductions will be made. He will be back to Council on those.

Gorrell asked when the appropriations are due, and Boyd told him they must be passed by March 31<sup>st</sup>, ideally sooner. Mayor Strine added it should be sooner so that the City isn't spending money it doesn't have; if the reductions aren't made soon, it is just that much more difficult to do it.

Detrow stated that she is very disappointed at the way that worked out; everyone has to work together to get through this, but it doesn't seem that all are doing so.

### ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Gorrell and seconded by Stewart to adjourn.

Ayes: Valentine, Gorrell, Detrow, Wertz, Stewart

Council **adjourned** at 7:39 p.m.

Submitted by

Elaine C. Bucklew  
Clerk of Council