

STREETS, BUILDINGS & GROUNDS COMMITTEE MINUTES
OF NOVEMBER 19, 2018

Municipal Council of the City of Vermilion
Municipal Complex, 685 Decatur Street, Vermilion, Ohio 44089

In Attendance:

Vermilion City Council:

Monica Stark, Council at Large; Frank Loucka, Ward Two; Steve Holoavacs, Ward Three; Barb Brady, Ward Four. Absent: Brian Holmes, Ward Five; Steve Herron, President of Council; John Gabriel, Ward One

Administration:

Jim Forthofer, Mayor; Tony Valerius, Service Director; Amy Hendricks, Finance Director; City Engineer, Chris Howard

Call to Order:

Frank Loucka, Chairman, RESOLVED THAT this Streets, Buildings, & Grounds Committee comprised of the committee of the whole does now come to order.

TOPIC ONE:

Firehouse Committee Recommendation

Mayor Forthofer explained in 2017 the Fire Chief had expressed a need for a new Fire Station #1 and this program ran into 2018 when he took over as Mayor. They formed a new Firehouse Committee which consisted of him along with Fire Chief Chris Stempowski; Councilman Holoavacs; Amy Hendricks, Finance Director; Tony Valerius, Service Director; Chris Howard, City Engineer; and, Mark Wagner, Criteria Architect of Poulos Schmid Design. The purpose of the committee was to assess the actual needs of the Fire Department for the new Firehouse and to hire the criteria architect to represent the interests of the city to determine a proper location for the new Firehouse and to eventually bring a recommendation to City Council for approval.

Chief Stempowski noted there has been a lot of time and effort put into this process. He has been Chief since 2006 and one of the issues facing the Fire Department has always been Station #1 on Ohio Street. The station was built in the 1950s probably for the size of pickup trucks instead of fire trucks. Over the years, the trucks got bigger and the needs for the city equipment evolved and they currently have a fleet that is difficult to maneuver in and out of that building – not just the apparatus but the personnel being able to get in and out of this structure. Overall, they need a larger space for the apparatus and for training capabilities – everything that goes with being a firefighter. They have diligently worked on the needs of the department more so than the wants and they have been a frugal bunch. He said they have worked with M. Wagner to come up with a design they feel would be beneficial to the department. There isn't enough room at the current site on Ohio Street, so another site needed to be determined. Therefore, they determined what was needed in this Firehouse, which basically came down to their current operations, including apparatus, training rooms and a tower. They currently have most of their apparatus in three different buildings for Station #1 (Station #1, Station #2, City Service Garage). All of this could be put into one site with minimal needs considered for the station. The Firehouse would be for the apparatus, the personnel, and the training, but there are also some additions that might come into question which are easily explained. For example, the bay and apparatus area are needed to park the equipment and they came up with some space saving ideas to include some mezzanines. They also have a radio room, supply room, gear room, and SCBA room that will be placed into the apparatus area. These rooms are critical to the fire department service which they don't have currently. A lot of this has to do with safety and firefighter health. On the administrative side are the offices for the officers of the department; very limited sized training room, but still meets the needs of the department based on personnel for a functional training room. There is also a day room for future consideration of a full-time/part-time department. They

currently do this now if they have storms – they will standby on shifts and they are literally sleeping on the back of a truck or any chair they can recline in. Therefore, the day room would be beneficial now and in the future. He said upon coming up with the highest priority of needs for the department, they presented it to the criteria architect who provided them with a preliminary floor plan which meets the needs well.

F. Loucka asked if the Firehouse would be designed for future expansion if needed. Chief Stempowski said it is being designed and built for future expansion. F. Loucka asked what the capacity would be for sleeping quarters if this Firehouse went to a full-time or strongly part-time department. C. Stempowski said currently they have eight bunks which are segregated. He doesn't know any department that staffs more than this.

B. Brady asked if the proposed site will affect the design of the building. C. Stempowski said site selection would have an impact on the design of the building. Mayor Forthofer said after examining several sites the current plan will accommodate the plan as written. M. Wagner said if the site doesn't meet the needs of the length then they can maneuver things to make it functional. He said the most economical way to construct a building is long and narrow. F. Loucka asked if the site is still under consideration.

Amy Hendricks spoke on the financing aspect of building a new Fire Station #1 and when reviewing options, they looked to see if they had an existing source of revenue. They do have the Fire Capital Levy in place that is one mill. There is a balance accumulated in this fund. They had Sudsina & Associates look at what some of the parameters of this project would be and what the revenue stream could support in an annual debt service, and it looks as though \$4 million overall would be the total available for the project – both land acquisition and the construction. This would be without having to ask the community for additional funds or expending operating dollars. As interest rates continue to rise and times goes on, it does erode the available funding, so timing before these rates get too high will maximize the money that is available.

B. Brady asked if they would take the \$1 mill and would isolate the operating expenses of the fire department and if the balance would go towards the loan. A. Hendricks explained there are two levies that support the fire department – one-mill operating that takes care of their personnel needs and ongoing day to day expenses and a capital and apparatus fund that is one-mill that is tracked in separate funds. B. Brady asked what the one-mill capital fund is doing right now; is it just accumulating funds? A. Hendricks said it's accumulating, but they also used it to purchase the Command vehicle. M. Stark asked if these levies come up for renewal every so often and A. Hendricks said they are continuous and they are part of a Charter amendment.

S. Holovacs addressed site selection as they have been discussing the needs of the department along with the finances. He said the bottom line is \$4 million. He said they discussed the Old Schoolhouse on Route 60, a piece of property on Douglas and Haley Streets, the Pat O'Brien property on Liberty Avenue, and the property at the Devon Drive Service Garage area. He said anything the city would purchase, or demo would take away from the \$4 million. He said they had to look at what they would lose in a building if they had to purchase property or demo property, as well as addressing asbestos issues. He said the group geared more towards the Devon Drive property because the City owns it. He said if they bought the Douglas/Haley property they would be able to see the Devon Drive property, so why even buy that property. He said the Pat O'Brien property could have cost over a half million to purchase and demo. Mayor Forthofer stated the site location recommendation is Devon/Douglas Drive (city-owned property). He made it clear that Pat O'Brien was very generous of his time and was willing to help the city in any possible way he could, but the city just couldn't make it fit. S. Holovacs said they are going to get \$4 million worth of a building and not \$3.2 and buying property to do it.

M. Stark asked if the property they are proposing on Devon Drive is where the current ice-skating rink is located and Mayor Forthofer concurred and noted the only thing at this location that will be eliminated is the ice-skating rink – the skate park will remain.

B. Brady asked if they based their decision on whether Station #2 would remain in existence and S. Holovacs said yes. Chief Stempowski said the way the fire department operates now and the geographical layout of the city, it is his opinion that they continue to operate the way they do now. He sees it now and in the foreseeable future. He can't speak 20-30 years down the road, but he knows as early as 2003 the same discussion was before council and it never went anywhere. He said nothing has changed as far as how they operate and perform their emergency services. They did have the bridge installed which is great for emergency response, but the other items the fire department is faced with; he firmly believes operating with a two-station setup is best for the city. Mayor Forthofer said they can't be building a department that doesn't fit with the current reality.

B. Brady asked if they feel access to the community is doable due to the railroad tracks, etc. Chief Stempowski said yes as he believes the proposed site selection would provide the same service they have in place now in every corridor of their jurisdiction, especially since they will have two stations. B. Brady said the river is a problem and they almost need to have a station on each side. Chief Stempowski said geographically Vermilion is unique in a sense that they have the river with a narrow bridge going over it, as well as two sets of railroad tracks running east and west, as well as two highways (Route 2 and Route 6), so there are a lot of obstacles for the fire department for emergency responses. He thinks the City is fortunate to have a two-station setup. He spoke with many chiefs on their opinions of how their departments were laid out and some went away from the two-station setup and they are fighting now to go back to that. He believes if Vermilion had one station, the site on Devon would still suffice, but it would become a manned station.

F. Loucka thanked the committee for their diligent work on coming up with a proposal. Council proceeded to review the actual plans before them.

F. Loucka MOVED; S. Holovacs seconded to authorize the administration to prepare specifications for RFQ's. Roll Call Vote 4 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED**.

TOPIC TWO: Ambulance Service

Mayor Forthofer summarized discussions from the November 15 Special Council Meeting by explaining that Vermilion Township went off on their own to provide ambulance service which caused them to withdraw from the City of Vermilion's umbrella coverage. Therefore, the fees for Vermilion would increase by another \$100,000 over the current \$52,000 the city is paying North Central EMS. They looked at different alternatives and met with other ambulance services, specifically Lifecare Ambulance who were willing to take on the City of Vermilion for \$100,000; assuming the City could provide them with coverage of a suitable facility to house their ambulances/personnel. Therefore, they looked at Fire Station #2 to see if they could house ambulances until the time they built their Firehouse by possibly building on an addition. However, Lifecare said Station #2 wasn't acceptable as it didn't have sleeping quarters/kitchen for the staff. They also looked at adding on to the proposed Firehouse for an ambulance facility and the estimated cost would be about \$200,000. They looked at the option of taking over the current ambulance facility at 1011 Douglas Drive that is owned by Norwalk Area Health Systems, Inc. He said it could be leased to the city for around \$2,000 - \$2,500 per month or the City could purchase it outright and save seven years of lease payments. He came before Council to request approval of purchasing the existing North Central EMS facility on Douglas Drive and Council adopted and approved an

ordinance to purchase the facility for \$180,000. He said the law department is preparing the purchase agreement, so everything is in place by January 1, 2019.

S. Holovacs asked how they plan on financing this purchase and A. Hendricks said they are looking to arrange some payment terms over the next 12 months with Norwalk Area Health Systems, Inc. to pay this off. She said they can make a down payment at this point, but with some of the savings they will experience over 2019, they should be able to make the money available without issuing any additional debt.

TOPIC THREE: Liberty Avenue Pedestrian Access Program

F. Loucka said this issue is a follow-up to the July Streets, Buildings, & Grounds Committee meeting where he suggested they come up with a pedestrian access program for the south side of Liberty Avenue to fill in the areas that have no sidewalks. He said the city engineer located all parcels without sidewalks and provided council with a sample Resolution of Necessity of constructing concrete sidewalks, as well as an ordinance that would levy assessments to property owners that didn't install their sidewalks within the dictated period. He asked council to review the city engineer's spreadsheet of 28 parcels that don't have sidewalks and they could work on preparing legislation. He said council can decide on the timeframe of installing the sidewalks. The city engineer felt one year was enough time to allow the property owners to install sidewalks.

M. Stark asked if the city would hire the contractor to install the sidewalks and assess the property owners if they didn't install their sidewalks within the required timeframe. F. Loucka concurred and said the assessment would probably be for ten years.

F. Loucka said they can proceed with legislation for council's review. B. Brady asked if the city could offer some names of contractors to the property owners. F. Loucka said in his experience contractors usually contact the property owners once this type of project goes public.

S. Holovacs asked if they will spec out the sidewalk criteria, so everybody is putting in the same type and width, etc. C. Howard said they are going to make it 4' the whole way. They will provide the property owner with the build specs and they will try to keep everything uniform. B. Brady said they should also try to make sure the existing sidewalks are in good shape. F. Loucka said this would be another topic for a future meeting as it relates to sidewalk repair, but he would like to keep this program separate now.

M. Stark said this is a good program that F. Loucka has brought to Council as it's about keeping their community safe when walking along Liberty Avenue. She understands it will be costly for the property owners but in the long run it will be so much better for the community. F. Loucka said the city had a sidewalk requirement for many years and some developments went before the Zoning Board of Appeals for a variance to waive sidewalks, but the board said if there is ever a sidewalk program they would support it. He said with city growth they want to be a professional community, and this is the city's main commercial corridor that needs to be made safe for people. He said he would work with the clerk and city engineer to draft legislation.

Mayor Forthofer said soon they will have a report submitted from the Community Development group who will be recommending the City of Vermilion's Corridor Study for the east end of Liberty to the county line and sidewalks may very well figure into their proposal.

B. Brady asked if they would be proposing sidewalks across the bridge at the east end of town. C. Howard said they are looking into the sidewalk across the bridge because there are concerns with ODOT requirements

because of the speed limit as it's not protected. If you have a child walking across the bridge even though it is striped, you do need pedestrian protection for anyone walking across the bridge. F. Loucka pointed out that the bridge on Oak Point Road in Amherst has a walkway with a wall.

M. Stark asked on the status of the Safe Routes to School. C. Howard said they are dealing with ODOT's new consultant on this project and they are at the point of determining the right of ways and easements that are required. They are trying to limit the cost to the city by the placement of the sidewalk. When Sanford was replaced the curb line got lower, so to meet ADA requirements, it's requiring that the sidewalks are pushed farther back and there are concerns about grading. They are working through a lot of issues and they have an ODOT meeting in early December. They will need to have public meetings in the future as a lot of driveways will need to be replaced. He expects this to be a construction project for the year 2020.

TOPIC FOUR: Service Center (Dumping Regulations)

T. Valerius reported he had a representative from the EPA's office tour the city's facilities to make sure they were EPA compliant. He provided council with a handout showing improvements that were done this summer. He explained that the dump site at the City Service Center has been regraded and grass has been planted. He noted in the spoils storage area they have removed large stockpiles which were regraded, and they installed a stone drive that prevents mud from being tracked to and from the site, which is a big EPA no-no. They designated certain areas for smaller stockpiles and they built a berm around the entire area and seeded the surrounding areas to prevent pollution runoff from leaving the site. They performed salt barn enhancements by installing a concrete pad with berm-easy clean up when transferring salt loads as it prevents storm water runoff. They don't want salt outside of the shed, so rains don't wash the salt away. Behind the salt shed the City has a natural swale which dissipates into the grassy area. He also had the swale moved back towards the rear of the City property of the fenced in area because it was directly behind the salt shed. He noted that check dams were installed to prevent sediment and other pollutants from leaving the site. Also, in the secondary containment area they had an existing concrete pad with lip to capture any spills from the emulsion tank as this suffices secondary containment regulations. He said scrap metal is contained in a leak-proof storage bin and it's tarped to prevent rainwater getting into the bin. They are talking all spoils from the street sweeper and putting them in the dumpster.

M. Stark asked if most of these improvements were done since Council toured the Service Center in the summer and T. Valerius said all these improvements were recently made; other than the berm around the emulsion tank as it was already done. M. Stark asked if the EPA was requiring the City to store salt in a building with a closed door and T. Valerius replied no. He said the salt piles are tarped in the summer to prevent the rain from getting in there. The pad is slightly tipped towards the bins so there shouldn't be any salt escaping, and the crews clean up after every major snow event. M. Stark asked if the City has plenty of salt in storage for the upcoming winter months and T. Valerius said he ordered 1200 tons, which should be sufficient.

Chairman Frank Loucka adjourned the meeting after no further discussion came before the committee.

Next meeting: December 10, 2018 @ 6:00 p.m.

Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk