

COVINGTON VILLAGE COUNCIL

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

August 28, 2023

Mayor Ed McCord called the meeting to order at 7:00PM. The following roll call was taken for council:

Council Members Present:

- Jesse Reynolds
- Amy Welborn
- Julie Blumenstock
- Dawn Duff
- Keith Warner
- Derrick Canan

Non-member Staff participating:

- Frank Patrizio – Legal Counsel
- Rhonda Gill - Fiscal Officer
- Kyle Hinkelman - Village Administrator
- Tim Cline – Police Sergeant

Old Business

Resolution R30-23 – Authorizing the Village Administrator to Request Proposals for an Addition and Remodel to the Village Government Center

Mr. Hinkelman noted that this was the second reading.

Rose Bennett, 315 E. Broadway, asked about how long term maintenance was being funded. She shared concerns about issues not being addressed, like those that created the need to do the investment in the building at this time. She also asked how the Village calculated the project affordability over time and if rental properties we calculated into that projection.

Terry Garman, 101 S. Pearl Street, stated he did not believe the figures provided by the Village work.

Joyce Robertson, 201 E. Lindsay, stated she felt that if security was a major concern, she felt that keeping the Council chambers in the middle of the building would be safer.

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Jeanne Scott, 125 S. High Street, stated she was concerned about where the money to construct the building would come from. She felt that the Village would raise taxes again to do the project. She noted she felt that issues would have been brought up over the last twenty years if they were actual problems with the building. She continued that she didn't think people would be able to live in Covington any longer if the Village keeps doing projects.

Ms. Blumenstock noted her concerns about the building, including safety concerns about the building design.

Ms. Welborn stated she felt that building safety was a major concern along with several other issues.

Ms. Bennett asked if the Village had a person who was directly hired to maintain the buildings and Mr. Hinkelman responded that they did not have anyone hired to do that specific task, but over the last two years the Village has maintained all of its buildings better. He noted Community Park where the Village has maintained the park better than it has been maintained in many years.

Ms. Scott asked why it needed to happen now. Mayor McCord noted that previous Council's had looked at the building but were focused on other projects like Walnut Street and Spring Street. He noted that the current world requires that we invest in the building. Ms. Scott asked why the Village doesn't just put a metal detector in the lobby of the Government Center. Ms. Welborn responded by stating that the Village would need to have an employee at the metal detector at all times for it to be of value. She noted that the Village wasn't looking to implement solutions that would require additional staffing if possible.

Ms. Welborn noted that she felt that the mold in the building and the continued water infiltration issues were very concerning. She noted as a public building, those issues should be very concerning for anyone who has to pay a water bill or comes to a Council meeting.

Mr. Canan stated that he would prefer to not spend money, but feels that this project is necessary for the Village.

Mr. Hinkelman noted that this project is designed to reduce long term maintenance, and to allow the Village to have a Government Center that will function for the next twenty to

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thirty years. He noted that its location in the middle of town is ideal for the majority of people to walk if they chose.

Ms. Robertson asked if there were any grants available for the project. Mr. Hinkelman responded that the Village has looked into many options, but there are not any current grants available for the construction of a government center that they were aware of. He noted the Village would be looking at a ten to fifteen year loan from a banking institution.

Ms. Duff asked how many people come into the Government Center on a standard day and Ms. Gill responded twenty on a regular day, but upwards of 50 or more on payment due dates.

Ms. Scott asked if the project could be broken down, and Mr. Hinkelman stated that it could. He continued that the estimate provided by the architect / engineer was that the work could cost 30% more if it is phased. He noted though that due to the issues in the building, it would not be recommended to do internal phasing, as mold and other infiltration issues would likely come back if only portions of the building were completed.

Ms. Bennett asked if the Village received an annual demographic report from St. Marys with our tax reporting. Mr. Hinkelman stated that the Village did not, but that Ms. Gill would look into it to see if that is something that is possible.

Mayor McCord explained the history of the tax department in the Village and when and why it was contracted out to St. Marys.

Mr. Hinkelman asked if there were any additional questions from the audience and there were none. He continued to detail the history of the Government Center investments, specific issues that need to be resolved, and the potential cost and timelines for the project. He noted that public involvement in this process has occurred for almost one year, with the first public discussion occurring in October of 2022. He also noted that the public meeting that was held for two hours in the Government Center had seven members of the public attend, with no one submitting comments or concerns.

Mr. Hinkelman stated that this resolution only allows the Village to go out for bid for the project, it does not obligate the Village to do the project yet. He noted that in October the Village will have to pass a resolution accepting a bid, which will move the project into the next stages.

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Mr. Canan reiterated that he felt that this project was necessary, even if he isn't overly excited about spending the money on it. He noted that it may not be a popular choice, but it is a necessary one.

Ms. Welborn noted a concern with waiting to phase it in and having to pay additional money for that work. She noted that if the Village needs this to be done, it will never be less expensive to do the work then now.

Mr. Reynolds stated his support of doing it right with the least amount of impact to the Village. He noted his support for more maintenance of all buildings and facilities in the Village and will continue to advocate for that funding.

Ms. Duff noted that her decision was not made lightly and her opinions have changed based on the discussions over the last ten months. She has taken a serious look at the numbers and although doing it in phases would be easier short term, it will cost the Village in the long term.

Ms. Blumenstock agreed with all of the previous comments. She noted she hears complaints about not streaming meetings, that the Council meeting room is hot, and that people are unable to hear the meetings because of the sound in the room. She said this project will fix all of those issues.

Mr. Canan noted that the Council as a whole is trying to be as transparent as possible about the situation, the project, and the goals for what this project will do for the Village.

Mr. Garman again stated he felt the numbers were extreme and that it would lead to a raise in taxes. Mr. Hinkelman noted that the project loan would be over 10 years and it was likely that in that time taxes will raise. He continued that at this time the Village is not asking to raise taxes to do this project, nor does the Village project a need for additional tax money to pay off the proposed loan. With that said, he noted that the cost of all forms of government are going up, and he didn't want anyone to state that the Village said that taxes will never go up over the next ten years, because they could.

Mr. Warner noted his support for the project and stated the Village needs to get it done.

Ms. Robertson noted that although the Village doesn't have a maintenance employee, they should make the Village Administrator aware of issues. Mr. Hinkelman agreed, and explained how the Village empowers its department heads to manage their equipment and buildings. He noted that as part of the Village budget process, which is

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a public process, he meets with each department head and works to create a budget that meets the needs of that year.

Mayor McCord explained the history of the board of public affairs and how the Village now works with department heads to run their own operations and maintenance priorities.

Mr. Hinkelman noted that the final numbers would be in the bids that were returned in October and the Village would be able to look at the numbers and determine what, if anything, they wanted to move forward with.

Ms. Robertson asked if local companies would be utilized for the work. Mr. Hinkelman noted that Garmann / Miller would send it out to all of their contacts, but that he would send it out to all potential bidders as well. He would also put it in the newspaper and put it on the website and social media. He noted that it is a public bid so he hoped local companies would bid on the work, but that the Ohio Revised Code obligates the Village to take the lowest and best bid.

There was no further discussion.

Motion to waive the three-reading rule was made by Mr. Canan, seconded by Mr. Reynolds. All ayes, motion carried.

Motion to approve Resolution R30-23 was made by Mr. Reynolds, second by Mr. Warner. All ayes, motion carried.

Executive Session

None

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Warner, seconded by Mr. Reynolds. The meeting was adjourned at 8:19 PM.



Fiscal Officer



Mayor

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