The Finance Committee for the Village of Monroeville met on Tuesday, January 18, 2023, at 6:00 PM in the Council Chambers to review the wage ordinance and discuss other financial matters.

Present were: Mayor Fries-Seip, Chris Raftery, Sue Rogers, Bob Whitacre, Sam Wiley, Craig Franklin, Tom Gray, Bonnie Beck, Heather Alicea, Ann Beck, Gary Lyons, and Troy Kimball.

Chris Raftery opened the meeting and asked Bonnie to go over the pending issue with Croghan Colonial Bank (CCB). Bonnie reminded everyone of what was discussed at the regular Council meeting, with CCB asking for a $33,313 payment from the Village of Monroeville. Bonnie reviewed her notes and she verified that the agreement between Gary Pollock, from CCB, and the Village said that the Village would pay for the work that was done when the parties met and discussed reasonable costs. Unfortunately, Gary moved forward and completed work on the ATM without discussing it with the Village. Gary went outside the scope of the contract that the Village had with Studer-Obringer and hired someone else to do the work. Gary was not in compliance with the agreement and Village solicitor Jim Barney has been stating this all along. Jim advised Bonnie via email that we can flat-out advise Gary that the Village isn’t going to pay the $33,313. The written agreement that was signed by both parties said: “The parties of this agreement shall work together to determine the reasonableness of cost.” When Bonnie, Tom, and Jim met with Gary Pollock, Gary acknowledged that he didn’t contact anyone and hired another company to do the work. The Village had allocated $8,000 for the signage and $4,000 for the ATM. That was in the allocation for the project since day one and those costs were already paid to CCB, which Gary is aware of. The Village’s financial commitment to the project has been paid. Bonnie asked Council members how they want to respond to CCB’s request for payment, as she knows there was a previous discussion regarding an exchange of property, and asked if that is still an active discussion. Tom said that would be all bundled into this discussion. Bonnie asked if the opportunity is still there and asked Tom to explain what that opportunity is. Tom said when the Village was initially discussing the properties, the Village approached CCB and said they would like to retain the existing property where the Police Station was, and in exchange for that, the Village would take on the maintenance and repair and treat it as a shared resource. Gary didn’t say no and thought it was workable. The conversation was then expanded and talks were had about the Village taking on the existing bank building and CCB becoming a tenant. Gary verified it was a topic worth pursuing. Gary did not respond negatively and Tom said he thinks the Village should continue to pursue that avenue to some extent, while not trying to overshadow the issue with the ATM. Tom said he doesn’t want the brick-and-mortar to go away, but if it does, Tom would like the Village to be in the position to purchase the building and a use for it to be determined. Tom said Gary had suggested getting it appraised and then the Village dropped the topic. Bonnie asked if the topic should be revisited so that this matter can be put to rest. Tom said he thinks it would be her call to continue to pursue the discussion regarding the extra costs, parallel to the discussion regarding the property. Chris asked if it would be worth having a negotiator step in to negotiate on the Village’s behalf. Tom said as far as the property goes, that wouldn’t have any harm or cause. As far as the ATM, a prior discussion was had with Gary and the Village should lead from Jim’s approach at this time, in regards to telling Gary that the Village isn’t going to cover his additional costs. Sue said she thinks the ATM costs should be resolved first, with Jim sending a letter stating the Village isn’t going to pay the extra costs and Chris agreed. Sam said maybe discussions can be had to agree to a lower amount. The Mayor reminded him that CCB could have had that discussion with the Village already, but instead, they removed the Village from the equation. Bob asked if the Village had been willing to split that cost with them, what would have been a “reasonable cost”? Bonnie said we already paid them for the following: $8000 for the removal of the current bank sign along with the cost and placement of a new sign on parcel B, reasonable costs related to wiring the new ATM in the temporary location, costs to remove the old ATM, and costs related to replacing the new ATM including the concrete pad, canopy, bollard poles and underground boring to connect to the new ATM. Jim said not only did CCB go outside of the contractor agreement, they just went ahead and did the work without discussing it with the Village. Tim Obringer had consulted with Tom, as he saw the ATM going up, and said he was never contacted about it. Tom said the excerpt from the contract that Bonnie cited is correct. There was a contract with Studer Obringer, but CCB went directly to Janotta & Herner. CCB previously had ATMs installed by Janotta & Herner at other CCB locations and the design was on their books. Tom said he believes Gary or Croghan didn’t want to have any additional design-related costs. The Village fulfilled all of its contractual obligations. Bonnie said Heather Mize, the project manager, sent a rather terse letter to Gary Pollock letting him know that he wasn’t to do that again in the future without communicating with the necessary parties. Bonnie asked for a consensus to address it at the next Council meeting. Chris said Council will ask Jim to send Gary a letter stating the Village’s response and that the Village refuses to pay anything further. Bonnie advised the Village already paid the costs they were responsible for and the Village wasn’t given an opportunity to discuss anything further. Sam agreed that a letter from Jim should be the next step. The Mayor asked Tom if he thinks the Village is cuffing itself for future interactions. Tom said no, he doesn’t think so. Bonnie said that when the meeting was held with Gary, they advised Gary that they weren’t happy with his request for payment since he didn’t follow the terms of the agreement.

Bonnie said the Village will be beautifying the corner of Rt 20 and Monroe Street this year. The traffic box has been moved and the bench has been received. Landscaping will be done and the goal is to have it completed in spring. There are two more payments on the police cruiser loan. Council had previously agreed to sell the tablets they are no longer using. Bonnie asked how much they wanted to sell them for. A sale price of $175 was discussed. Bonnie advised a motion will have to be brought before Council at the next meeting on whatever price is agreed upon.

Bonnie advised a couple of municipalities are in the process of updating their zoning ordinances. Jim had mentioned to Bonnie that there is a gentleman who is doing it for the Village of Milan and the Village of Oak Harbor. Monroeville’s zoning ordinance is from 2008 and is outdated. The gentleman that Jim mentioned is from Toledo, and he does all the updates and makes sure to cover all the state laws. The price that he quoted to Milan for his services is between $3000-$5000. Bonnie would like Council’s permission to hire him to review our zoning ordinance and update it accordingly. Chris and Sam were in favor. Bonnie said she will ask for a motion at the next Council meeting.

Chris asked about longevity. Bonnie explained that longevity pay is reviewed every January after the Administrative office balances out payroll. Per the policy manual, we take the base wages of every employee and there is a scale of the percentages. For every three years worked, there is an extra percentage. If an employee works for three years, they get one percent of the base wages that they made that particular year. Once they work six years they get two percent, and so on, up to five percent. There is a cap once an employee reaches $2000 for the longevity payout. It’s 2,080 hours times the rate of pay. Any pay increase given during the year is taken into consideration as well. The payout is with the first pay of the year. Discussion with how many employees are at the cap or close to the cap. The Mayor said she isn’t sure she wants to punish the long-term employees by placing a cap on longevity. The Mayor doesn’t like the idea of a cap and said she thinks the cap should be removed, as it doesn’t seem right and doesn’t reward or help keep employees. Craig agreed. Discussion. The Mayor said another option is to cap it at $5,000. Bonnie said Council could always raise the cap and re-look at it down the road.

Bonnie reminded everyone that at the last Council meeting, she had asked for a .50 cent increase per hour for employees, which was to be discussed at tonight’s meeting. Bonnie would now like to ask for an hourly increase of $1.00 per hour for employees who have been here more than six months. Bonnie would like Council to show the employees that they are working toward getting them a wage package that is more comprehensible across the board. The Mayor said she believes the cost-of-living adjustments are at least 8%. Bonnie said that is wonderful, but this is just a starting point for the wage discussion. Bonnie said the only employee whom this wouldn’t affect is Jonah Mersereau, who just started recently. The Mayor asked if Jonah would be getting any increase after coming off his probation. Bonnie said Council would need to make a motion for that at that time. Chris asked if the $1.00 should be increased considering the cost of living. Bob asked how the budget was looking. Bonnie said the budget is stable and much of that is due to how conscientious the superintendents are with their spending. It was agreed to address the $1.00 increase per hour in a motion at the next Council meeting.

Bonnie said Tom had mentioned in prior meetings wanting to get the sidewalk program rejuvenated. Bonnie provided a handout to show revenue and expenditures from the GATSO traffic camera citations. The ordinance for traffic cameras doesn’t mention how the money should be allocated. Bonnie would like to see the ordinance amended to allocate some of these funds to the sidewalks. The income from the GATSO fines is supposed to be for the safety and well-being of our citizens. The crappy sidewalks are a detriment to the safety of our citizens. Setting aside money from GATSO would help pay for some of the sidewalk expenditures and perhaps part of the resurfacing as well. It’s a good idea to allocate some GATSO money for the safety and well-being of our citizens. If Monroeville is going to be a trail town, then this would put us in the right direction. Discussion. Everyone agreed this is a good idea. Tom touched on the current status of engineering. It’s at a stopping point right now. We need to consider an alternate pathway. For example, determining usability for the greenspace would be soil boring. The last number Tom received from PDG was $500,000 to $1,000,000 for the sidewalks. We can’t take the next step without having sizable dollars.

The Mayor mentioned the inclement weather that occurred at Christmas time and asked if there is anything set up for hazard pay for employees who still had to come to work, like the MPD and the Water Department. Everyone else was home, safe and cozy, while other people had to come to work to do their job. The Mayor asked how they can show their appreciation for the employees that reported to work. The Mayor said some were home warm and cozy, but everyone else had to be at work, whether it was overtime or not and asked if hazard pay can be reviewed. Bonnie said she would have to check around and would start with the auditor. The Mayor felt bad, as she was safe at her house while getting reports on the weather situation from Troy. Chris reminded her it was a level 3 that day. Sam said most of the employees, like the Electric Department, already work a hazardous job. Chief suggested time-and-a-half for reporting to work in hazardous weather. The Mayor feels the employees who reported deserve a little bit extra.

The Mayor asked if all holiday pay is time-and-a-half. Bonnie said on the observed holiday, employees get eight hours of regular, holiday pay, which is eight hours at their regular pay rate. If they work on the holiday, they get time-and-a-half. Chief said this is one of those things that affects the floating holidays. For example, he had sufficient manpower over the holidays and wanted to give Troy Christmas day off to be with his family. Troy could not take that off as a holiday designation because of the way everything is worded. Employees can take the holiday on the observed day. Chief had to work the schedule around just to give Troy a day off that day, not a holiday. Bonnie said if Troy would have gotten paid time-and-a-half and his holiday pay, what would he have gotten paid on Monday the 26th, which was the observed holiday? Bonnie understands Chief’s point, but said let's say Troy worked Christmas day and got eight hours of holiday pay at his regular rate, and eight hours at time-and-a-half because it’s a holiday…but Monday was the observed holiday, so what would he have gotten on Monday, just his regular rate of pay? What if he took that day off because it’s an observed holiday? Chief said it would have been a holiday. Bonnie said you can’t get paid a holiday twice. Chief said that’s just it, you can’t take off a holiday on Christmas day. Chief said on Sunday, December 25th, the MPD couldn’t give anyone the holiday off because the observed holiday is Monday. If they could give them the holiday off on December 25th, that solves the problem. The way it’s worded right now is if anyone gets holiday pay, it has to be on the observed holiday, which is Monday, the 26th. If the Chief wants to give the full-timers the day off on Christmas day, he can’t do it because of the language. Chief said that is the whole argument, how can Council make it fair for the MPD and other departments? Bonnie said one person from the Water Department always comes in on a holiday per the handbook. Chief said he thinks there can be a better way. Everyone expressed confusion over what Chief was trying to explain. Chief said it only happens on the floating holidays when they fall on Saturday or Sunday. Bonnie asked Chief to put his question in writing to better interpret it. Bob asked Chief what he meant, what happens if Troy works both days? Chief said Troy would get time-and-a-half on Christmas, and get the holiday pay and his regular pay on the observed Monday. However, the only day MPD can give someone a holiday off is on Monday, the observed day. The Mayor asked why can’t the day be scheduled off, is there something that says they can’t be scheduled off? Bonnie said no. Chief said from his understanding, it has to be on the observed holiday to get the holiday pay. (Sam stepped out of the meeting at 7:02 to make a phone call.)

Bonnie asked Tom to introduce the new position that was previously discussed. Tom said as discussed previously with the position descriptions, he’d like to make a stand-alone position for Rick Whiteside. Rick isn’t going to go any further with the licensing process for water/wastewater. Creating a stand-alone position unique to this individual allows us to move him into an area that fits his skill set and doesn’t compromise his ability to run our water or wastewater treatment plants. Bonnie and Tom worked on his position description to allow it to fit with the long-term/mid-term goal of keeping a valued employee. It falls in line with the other position descriptions that have been submitted.

Bonnie said the auditor had suggested the on-call program from the employee handbook be added to the wage ordinance. It’s a struggle to get from the bottom of the pay range to the top of the pay range. Michelle Ish had previously suggested adding levels based on job descriptions to help with the pay ranges. That is exactly what Bonnie did for Ann and Heather. She culled it to start from the entry-level and go up. The range will be small, as in that period, they could still get an annual increase. The goal is to get them to the next level. It’s a matter of talking to the superintendents to determine what needs to come first. Water and sewer will be different, as they include EPA certifications. (Craig left the meeting at 7:15 PM. Bob asked where Joe was and he thinks Joe forgot to attend tonight.) Chris asked Chief if there was anything he’d like to add. Chief suggested removing the cap on earned time pay-out and would like to see the afternoon shift premium be raised from .15 cents per hour to .40 cents per hour. The Mayor asked Bonnie to explain the cap on the earned time, as MPD has a hard time finding coverage to use their earned time. Bonnie said she doesn’t refer to it as a cap. Employees earn four hours every month if they go thirty days without calling in sick. At the end of the year, they get reimbursed for the earned time they don’t use but the payout can’t exceed twenty-four hours. (Sam rejoined the meeting at 7:17 PM.) The Mayor asked if the payout can be increased to 48 hours and if it can be done by motion. Chris asked if the hour payout will be raised or if the cap did away with it. Heather advised most employers have a cap of twenty-four hours for payout on earned time. (Bob said he received word from Joe that Joe forgot about the meeting tonight.) Chief asked Bonnie how many more payments are owed on the police cruiser and she verified two. Bob asked Chief how they like the hybrid vehicles. Troy said the vehicles have a lot of idle time and if they are sitting, they run on battery without running the motor, so there isn’t a lot of maintenance.

Heather said she reviewed the info that Gary previously provided regarding the traffic camera program in Newburgh Heights and she looked at their website. She said they have everything a customer is looking for regarding traffic citations, right down to the certificate of calibration on the website and a map showing where the traffic cameras are. She suggested Monroeville borrow their layout and use it for both the Village website, the MPD website and the MPD Facebook page so that the information is uniform and fits the customer’s needs. Doing so may help cut down on the volume of questions that the Administrative Office receives, as well as MPD and the municipal court. The Administrative Office is inundated with phone calls and walk-ins right now from traffic citations. The municipal court contacted Bonnie recently and asked that the ordinance be updated because of all the phone calls and foot traffic they are getting. Bonnie verified the court is getting a ton of calls and walk-ins and the judge is getting upset as it's taking court staff away from their jobs. Bonnie said there are times when she, Ann, and Heather are all on the phone or with a customer at the same time for GATSO citations. The Mayor asked if it would help to have one central person specifically dealing with GATSO citations. Bonnie and Heather advised one person wouldn’t be able to handle that. Chief proposed some changes with GATSO due to the overlap of paying the citation on the due date and then a second notice with late fees going out the very next day. Bonnie verified the customers also don’t understand that the payments aren’t processed in Monroeville, even though the citation has a Monroeville PO box for payments. A postal carrier picks up the mail from that PO Box once a week and then that mail goes out of state to the GATSO citation processing center. Chris verified changing the citations and updating our websites will hopefully help.

There being no other finance business to come before them, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

 Heather Alicea