

The Finance Committee for the Village of Monroeville met in Council Chambers on Thursday, March 26, 2026, at 6 PM, for the purpose of discussing any financial matters that came before them.

Present were: Committee members Chris Raftery, Tammy Schlachter, and Bob Whitacre as well as Mayor Joseph Galea; Village Administrator Tom Gray; Fiscal Officer Eunice A. Collene; Chief Jon Earl; Solicitor Jim Barney; Council members, Mark Miller, and Jim Ehrman; Administrative Assistant Ann Beck; Administrative Specialist Heather Alicea; Water & Wastewater Superintendent Don Clark; Andrew & Elisa Brown; Tom Sitterly; David Luna; and Diana Nicholl.

Ms. Raftery opened the meeting. She asked Mr. Barney to share information he had gathered regarding Mr. Luna's previous request for reimbursement. In January 2026, emergency sewer repairs were completed at Mr. Luna's place of business at 18 S Main Street. The repair was required because a village utility pole had been installed within a 12-inch storm pipe before Mr. Luna purchased the property. The total cost of the repair amounted to \$33,880, for which Mr. Luna is seeking reimbursement. Mr. Barney stated that Mr. Luna is seeking reimbursement due to a pole that was recently installed by the village. The mayor intervened and clarified that the utility pole was not installed recently. The sewer line existed prior to Mr. Luna's purchase of the building. At that time, Mr. Luna wasn't aware of the sewer line's condition. Also, the utility pole was installed prior to Mr. Luna's purchase of the building, and a village storm drain has damaged the sewer line, as confirmed by Mr. Gray. The mayor said that this information is important when explaining Mr. Luna's reimbursement request.

Mr. Barney said that Ms. Collene had recently reached out to the village insurance company. Mr. Barney researched to understand why the insurance company would not consider covering the repair. In Ohio, political subdivisions are protected from liability. Within political subdivisions, there are governmental functions and proprietary functions. Governmental functions pertain to activities such as operating a police force, designing a sewer system, and zoning. Proprietary functions act as a carveout and include all aspects not covered by governmental functions. An example of a proprietary function includes the operation, design, management, and maintenance of a utility. Proprietary functions aren't immune from negligent conduct. Mr. Barney said that it appears to him that the village is not immune and that the court's decisions would be based on the outcomes. The mayor agreed. Mr. Barney stated that, from his perspective on the law, the village is not immune. Should Mr. Luna seek to collect, the village would be defended by the insurance company, which is obligated to the amount owed to Mr. Luna. At that time, it would be the court's responsibility to determine whether immunity applies. If immunity is not applicable, the next step would involve determining when the utility pole was installed, whether it was installed negligently, whether the village had any duties, and whether those duties were breached. Mr. Barney said he is uncertain regarding the village's immunity from liability. Mr. Barney inquired if Ms. Collene had communicated with the attorney for the insurance company or an insurance agent. Ms. Collene clarified that she had spoken with an agent, who informed her that Ohio operates under a no-fault state and that they would provide defense for the village in court. The mayor further elaborated on Mr. Barney's comments concerning immunity. If an individual filed a lawsuit, immunity serves as a defense that the village of Monroeville could claim, which means that one cannot sue the village for matters for which one could sue an ordinary person. Mr. Barney advised that in circumstances where the village lacks immunity, Mr. Luna could potentially file a claim against the village. If that is indeed the situation, then perhaps the insurance company should address this matter and initiate a claim on behalf of Mr. Luna. Mr. Barney confirmed that this is not a legal decision, but rather a decision that the village has to make. Ms. Raftery inquired whether the village would need to defend itself if Mr. Luna submits a claim to his insurance provider. Mr. Barney responded that he is uncertain if Mr. Luna could file a claim with his insurance company. He explained that, should Mr. Luna have the option to sue the village, the village could involve

its insurance provider. The mayor clarified that an insurance claim could be filed before any lawsuit is filed. Mr. Barney said that if Mr. Luna reaches out to the village to inform them of his intention to file a lawsuit, the village could put Mr. Luna in contact with the insurance broker. The mayor noted that Mr. Luna has also provided information regarding damages incurred by his business beyond the sewer repair. Mr. Luna's business was without indoor plumbing for ten days. The mayor said he is uncertain whether Council would be able to reimburse those expenses or if the insurance company would be able to do so. Mr. Luna then asked Council to clarify whether he has to sue the village's insurance company to receive reimbursement. Ms. Brown said that if the business owners are attempting to revitalize the downtown area, and the village is at fault for this situation, they should rectify the issue. She expressed confusion as to why the village would wish to subject the business owner to any more difficulties than those they have already dealt with. Ms. Collene said that she had a conversation with Mr. Mike Buxton from the Hylant Group. She mentioned that a claim number was assigned, as she needed to provide him with the photographs and details from Mr. Luna. The mayor inquired whether Hylant Group had issued a denial after the claim was initiated. Ms. Collene clarified that he had explained to her that Ohio operates under a no-fault system, and indicated that there is no coverage for this situation, and that they would represent us in court if any claims were filed. Mr. Luna stated that he is not seeking reimbursement for other expenses he incurred, such as the additional water bill and the porta-potty rental. He is only requesting reimbursement for the sewer repair. Ms. Brown questioned whether there had been any other utilities in the town that were damaged by the village and then repaired by the village. Ms. Collene asked about the church that had recently received reimbursement. Mr. Gray clarified that the parsonage at the United Church of Christ experienced a sewer backup. It was found that their line had failed between the building and the sidewalk. The village was present when the church's contractor uncovered the line. The storm drain that had been installed by the village in the 1980s along Chapel Street was not reconnected to the lateral coming from the parsonage. A new line was installed, but the village did not reconnect the lateral to this line. The village reimbursed the church \$500 for the tap. The mayor specified that the reimbursement was for the tap itself and not for utility damage. The mayor also asked which fund would cover the reimbursement, questioning whether it would be from the general fund or the sewer fund. Ms. Collene advised that if it pertained to sewer issues, it would be paid from the sewer fund. Mr. Clark suggested that it should come from the storm sewer fund instead of the sewer fund, due to the lateral, or possibly from the electric fund. Ms. Collene clarified there is no storm sewer fund. It would be considered streets. Mr. Clark recommended checking if an Ohio Utility Protection Service (OUPS) ticket had been filed before a dig took place. The village is responsible for sending that out, which leads to utilities being marked. Mr. Clark said the area was probably not marked correctly. If it had been, they would not have dug to install a utility pole. He said he is unsure whether OUPS tickets are kept for that long, but he believes liability would fall on whoever failed to mark it properly. Ms. Collene mentioned that she and Ms. Alicea had researched OUPS because they believed liability would fall on the contractor who failed to submit an OUPS ticket. Ms. Collene stated that she would further research the issue. There was a discussion among two Council members, to which the mayor replied that any dialogue must be conducted in a tone audible to those present. Ms. Raftery asked whether the village could cover half of the expenses incurred by Mr. Luna. Mr. Miller proposed that Ms. Collene forward all the documents that Mr. Luna had given her to the insurance representative. Ms. Collene confirmed that she had already sent all the information to the insurance company. The mayor suggested involving Mr. Barney at this point. Ms. Raftery inquired if the reimbursement would be paid from the electric fund, given that an electric pole was installed, or if it could be paid from both the electric and sewer funds. Ms. Collene clarified that when she spoke earlier, she was referring to sewer, as others had mentioned sewer as well. Now that Mr. Clark has specified that the repair was for storm sewer, the reimbursement would need to be paid from either the electric fund or the street fund. Ms. Collene would need to closely examine the funding for both. Ms. Collene will provide Mr. Barney with all the information from Mr. Luna and the claim number associated with the insurance

company, so he can reach out to them. Mr. Barney said that he would see what he could do, but there is no guarantee that he would be able to get past the claims representative. Ms. Brown asked whether there is a possibility for Mr. Luna to receive reimbursement now, after which the village could seek payment from the insurance provider. Mr. Barney responded that he has not seen that done before. Ms. Collene then asked Council and Mr. Barney what the subsequent steps would be for Mr. Luna if the insurance company denies reimbursement. This information would enable Ms. Collene to prepare for the next step, allowing them to provide Mr. Luna with a timely response. Ms. Schlachter said we should start looking at the possibility of reimbursement and review funds depending on the outcome of the insurance claim. Mr. Clark said if an OUPS ticket was not completed and the village installed a pole, then the village wouldn't be considered negligent. Ms. Collene asked if this matter could be discussed at the regular Council meeting on April 14, 2026. The mayor confirmed and said a special Council meeting could also be scheduled if we receive a response from the insurance company before April 14. Ms. Collene said that she will contact OUPS to determine how far their ticket history extends.

Ms. Raftery initiated a discussion regarding the fees associated with food truck permits and whether the fee should be set at \$25 or \$100. Ms. Collene reminded everyone that this topic was addressed during the regular Council meeting on March 10, 2026, and a proposal was made to revise the food truck ordinance and reduce the fee from \$100 to \$25. Gabby Toscano has drafted legislation on this matter, which Ms. Collene offered to distribute to Council, along with a copy of the existing ordinance. Ms. Beck inquired about the reasoning behind the village's consideration of lowering the food truck permit fee. She noted that several Council members who are present tonight were part of Council when the original food truck ordinance was established. Research was done regarding the costs, and a \$100 permit fee was deemed reasonable at that time. Mr. Miller asked whether the proposed change was related to the library's request for a reduced fee. Ms. Alicea asked if the proposal to reduce the food truck permit fee stemmed from the library misadvising food truck vendors regarding the fee amount. Ms. Collene said that during the previous Council meeting, it was stated that the Administrative Office does not incur a cost of \$100 to process a permit application. Ms. Beck asked whether anyone has researched the fees that other communities charge food vendors for permits. Ms. Raftery and the mayor both confirmed that research was done when the original ordinance was created. Ms. Alicea stated that she recalls Council holding multiple meetings to research and agree on a fee amount when the original ordinance was established. The mayor stated that he remembers Council reviewing the vendor fees of the City of Norwalk when the ordinance was established in the village. Ms. Beck reminded everyone that the \$100 fee covers a twelve-month permit period. Mr. Whitacre said he thinks we should keep the fees down to promote people coming to the village. Elisa asked if there was any cost for the Fire Chief to inspect the food trucks, and Mr. Gray stated no. Chief said charging the fee helps protect the village's brick-and-mortar businesses. Ms. Raftery recalls that same discussion when the ordinance was established. The mayor stated that he is not aware of any problems concerning local businesses losing customers to food trucks. In the past, food trucks have operated during the hours when local businesses are closed. Mr. Ehrman said it's his understanding that the conversation regarding the fee originated from a misunderstanding by the library about the food truck permit fee. However, the conversation has since evolved into a different matter. The library is frustrated because they believed the fee was \$25, which is the amount they communicated to their food vendors. Mr. Ehrman inquired whether a one-time exception of \$25 could be granted for the library's event. He believes it is reasonable to impose a \$100 fee if the vendor intends to use water and electric services, and a \$25 fee if they do not. Ms. Collene said that she feels tonight's discussion is unrelated to the library; rather, it was initiated by the library submitting a letter concerning the fee. The library had requested that Council consider a fee adjustment for this year and sought the reason for the fee. Ms. Collene suggested that Council could provide a recommendation this evening regarding what they want prepared for the upcoming Council meeting. There was a discussion about potentially amending

the fee to \$25 for the year 2026. Mr. Barney proposed that there should be some rationalization for amending the fee, whether it be on a per-event basis, per season, or by completely revising the ordinance. If Council has a different perspective on the fees to be charged, he recommended revising the ordinance, with a provision to waive fees for specific circumstances. Mr. Miller proposed keeping the fee at \$100, as this amount covers the food truck for an entire year and permits them to operate as frequently as they want during that period. Ms. Collene explained that the problem from the library's perspective stems from a miscommunication by someone at the village regarding the fee, which was incorrectly stated as \$25. Ms. Alicea recommended that Council exercise due diligence when contemplating any changes to the fee, rather than making adjustments based on a miscommunication. A proposal was made to reduce the fee to \$25, utilizing the ordinance prepared by Gabby. Mr. Miller also requested that the Administrative Office verify the date when the most recent food vendor(s) submitted their permit applications, to initiate a partial refund should the ordinance be changed. Mr. Whitacre suggested providing the library with a credit for this year only, while keeping the fee at \$100. Ms. Schlachter said she doesn't see the need to charge \$100 for a food truck permit if it doesn't cost \$100 for the Village Administrative Office to process the permit.

The conversation transitioned to the topic of wages for village employees. Ms. Raftery inquired about the village's financial status regarding the possibility of implementing a wage increase. Ms. Collene distributed a handout to Council members that outlines the current cash position as of the close of business today, and she explained the figures presented in the handout. The electric fund has a shortage of nearly \$118,000. The water fund has close to \$26,000 available. Ms. Collene has been monitoring both the electric and water funds closely. The AMP bond anticipation note (BAN) is scheduled to be expended from the electric fund in April 2026, which is an expense of \$490,000. Upon completion of payroll, the water fund's expenditure is around \$20,000 monthly for wages and benefits, while the electric fund's expenditure is around \$27,000 for the same categories. Ms. Collene has had to request that her staff input revenue before processing payroll to restore those figures to a positive balance. This pertains to the unexpended column on the handout she provided, and represents the cash balance before any encumbrances. Ms. Collene said that she can provide Council with the figures, but she also believes it is important to consider sustainability. It is not solely considering the wage line item. Council should also consider OPERS, Ohio BWC, and longevity, as these are calculated from wages. In other words, if wages increase, the expenses in those benefit lines will increase as well. Ms. Collene explained that it's important to question the return on our investment and sustainability in order to ensure that funds are healthy moving forward. Currently, our cash balances leave little room for emergency repairs. In reviewing revenue vs. expenses, the funds will continue to be depleted if we spend more than what we are bringing in for revenue. Our cash balances in each fund should contain at least one month's worth of operating expenses, and currently, they do not. The electric fund is likely to fluctuate, as customers with electric heating will not be using as much. The water fund may experience an increase due to customers watering their lawns and filling their pools. Ms. Collene requested that Council remember that in previous years, funds were transferred from these accounts into the capital improvement funds. However, the transfer did not occur this year, as there were insufficient funds available to allow a transfer of funds. Following the conferences that Ms. Collene recently attended, all municipalities are experiencing increases in health insurance ranging from 15% to 25%, so that has to be taken into consideration as well. Mr. Miller inquired whether all employees received a wage increase when previous wage increases were implemented. Ms. Collene said that, to her knowledge, wage increases were uniformly given in the past. Mr. Clark interjected, stating that this was the case until January 2026. Ms. Collene further explained that she is addressing Mr. Miller's question regarding past actions and is attempting to clarify that the increases applied to all employees rather than one employee over another. Mr. Clark interjected once more, indicating that such a situation can occur, and it has occurred in the past. Merit-based raises may be

awarded to an employee upon obtaining licensure or certification. Mr. Clark mentioned that an end-of-year 3% increase is applied across the board. Mr. Miller asked if employees are seeking a 3% wage increase, to which Mr. Clark confirmed, and that he wants the same 3% increase that was awarded to another department in January 2026. Ms. Collene clarified that the decision regarding wage increases rests with Council, regardless of the amount of the percentage. It is Ms. Collene's responsibility to present the figures to Council, which is precisely what she is doing. Mr. Miller inquired if Ms. Collene could supply the same handout that reflects a 3% wage increase. Ms. Collene clarified that what Mr. Miller is currently looking at is the village's existing cash balance. Mr. Clark informed Mr. Miller that he could provide the figures he is seeking for the water and wastewater department. The cost of a 3% wage increase, with all adjustments made, would be less than \$631.07 for the wastewater department, and an additional \$2,314 would need to be added to Ms. Collene's initial figures. Ms. Collene advised Council that she disagrees with those figures and mentioned that Mr. Clark has not met with her to discuss them. Mr. Clark said that in January 2026, the water fund was the lesser fund, and \$11,000 in salary funds was transferred from the water fund to the wastewater fund. This amount exceeds the cost of a 3% wage increase for water and wastewater employees. Mr. Clark stated that, specifically regarding water and wastewater, there are funds available based on what was budgeted and approved to accommodate wage increases. Ms. Collene questioned Mr. Clark, asking whether, when he claims there is 'money to cover,' he is referring to the appropriations or the cash balance. Mr. Clark said that he is referring to appropriations. Ms. Collene clarified that appropriations are entirely different. She indicated that Mr. Miller had just asked her to take the report displaying the cash balances, which indicates that Mr. Clark's department currently has a cash balance of \$25,000, and to incorporate a 3% wage increase into it. As she previously stated, how can that fund be sustained, and how should this be considered when considering another 3% wage increase leading into 2027? Mr. Clark said that in August 2025, Ms. Collene informed Council that the wage increases she sought for her Administrative staff would not have a significant effect on the budget. However, he noted that three months later, Ms. Collene advised Council that basic raises, which would be less costly than her staff increases, would severely impact the budget, which he finds impossible. Ms. Collene reminded Mr. Clark that when employees in his department receive a wage increase for obtaining certification, and Mr. Gray seeks Council's approval for those increases, there are no questions raised regarding the budget. She explained that her Administrative staff has job descriptions that include the same language as Mr. Clark's staff concerning the requirement of obtaining certification to qualify for a wage increase. For instance, Ms. Alicea's job description indicates that she was required to obtain OMCA (Ohio Municipal Clerk Association) certifications, which she successfully achieved; however, she did not receive a wage increase. When Ms. Collene started her employment with the village, she asked for Council's approval for a wage increase for her staff to ensure they were compensated in accordance with the certifications they had earned. Furthermore, Ms. Alicea could have requested that her wage increase be made retroactive to the time she received her certification, as has been done by Mr. Clark's staff in the past. Ms. Collene's staff were presented with the budget figures clearly, and Ms. Collene acted fairly to compensate her staff without negatively affecting the overall budget. Mr. Clark stated that he does not oppose the Administrative staff receiving a wage increase, as that is unrelated to his request. If a 3% wage increase for the water and wastewater department would exceed the budget, and Ms. Collene's staff receiving a wage increase did not exceed the budget, and a 3% wage increase would incur lower costs than the wage increases for Ms. Collene's staff, then the other departments can receive a wage increase. Ms. Collene reminded Mr. Clark that her staff did not receive a 3% wage increase in January 2026, either. Mr. Clark said that when Ms. Collene requested that her staff receive wage increases, the figures must have been very similar to the current ones. He was not aware of any significant expense that would have depleted \$200,000 from that fund. At that time, Mr. Clark said that Ms. Collene was agreeable to whatever the cash balance was, but now she isn't. Ms. Collene clarified that circumstances have changed. Before that period, Rick Whiteside had received a \$3 per hour wage increase due to his certification and licenses. Mr. Clark

said that in August 2025, Ms. Beck received a \$0.13 per hour wage increase, bringing her to the top of her wage scale, which was based on her twenty-nine years of service with the village. Mr. Clark stated that he has been with the village for twenty-six years and is \$9 away from reaching the top of his wage scale. He then asked Ms. Collene if she would be comfortable with him receiving a \$9 per hour wage increase. Ms. Collene responded that the decision regarding a wage increase for Mr. Clark is not hers to make. Mr. Clark then asked what her recommendation would be to Council at that moment and whether there are sufficient funds in the budget to accommodate that kind of increase. Ms. Collene informed Mr. Clark that if she is advising Council that the budget can't sustain a 3% wage increase currently, then the budget can't support a \$9 increase either. Ms. Collene further clarified that this is not a reflection of her belief in an employee's right to a wage increase. Her duty is to present the financial figures to Council. Ms. Collene pointed out that the electric fund is in significantly worse condition than the water and wastewater funds. In response, Mr. Clark mentioned that there are two employees in the electric department, and a 3% wage increase would only result in an additional cost of \$4,000 to \$5,000 for the year. He argued that if Ms. Collene claims that the electric department is \$200,000 in deficit, it shouldn't impact the overall budget. Ms. Beck questioned Mr. Clark on how he could compare a \$9 per hour wage increase to a \$0.13 per hour wage increase. Mr. Clark acknowledged that Ms. Beck's wage increase was small, but that she is at the peak of her pay scale, while he is not. Ms. Beck expressed her confusion regarding the relevance of that point. Mr. Clark said that he isn't against the 3% wage increase that the police department received in January 2026, but he is now being informed that there are insufficient funds to extend the same increase to other departments. The salary line item had been previously approved, indicating that there are funds available for wage increases. Ms. Collene reminded Mr. Clark that she had requested him multiple times to come in and discuss his department's budget with her. Mr. Clark said that he has visited her several times and has received numerous reports from her. Ms. Collene indicated that she communicated with Mr. Clark over the phone, clarifying that the appropriation figures differ from the cash balance figures. When Mr. Clark reviews the appropriated figures and assumes there are available funds, those figures come from the funds that were carried over, in addition to the estimated revenue, minus the expenses. If the anticipated revenue does not materialize, and we fail to achieve the estimated revenue, while expending all available funds on expenses, we will find ourselves in a dangerous situation. At that point, we would face significant challenges and potentially enter a state of fiscal emergency. Mr. Clark stated that according to the figures provided by Ms. Collene, an increase would affect the water fund by \$631. Ms. Collene noted that our current cash balance does not cover a month's worth of operating expenses. Should Mr. Clark wish to consult with local government services from the state auditor's office, Ms. Collene can provide him with the contact details. Ms. Collene has already explained the appropriations to Council and what is anticipated. Ms. Collene said she has made Council aware of her concerns, and it is up to them to make a decision. When they make a decision, Ms. Collene will adjust the appropriations as necessary. If other expenses can be cut, and if Mr. Gray has any projects that can be cut, that would help. The decision ultimately lies with Council regarding their course of action. Ms. Collene also mentioned that she cannot predict any emergencies that might affect those funds. The mayor inquired whether water revenue is decreasing, as he recalled John Courtney previously informing Council that there was more capacity in the water fund. Ms. Collene clarified that, based on the year-to-date analysis, comparing the revenue and expenses of the water fund, we currently have just under \$30,000 in revenue exceeding expenses. For the electric fund, we are seeing just under \$500,000 in revenue over expenses. However, it is important to note that when we fully pay the AMP BAN on April 13, 2026, the electric fund will experience a setback. In discussions with John Courtney, he recommended that the BAN should be paid in full. Mr. Clark requested that Ms. Collene confirm whether the sewer fund can support a wage increase, to which Ms. Collene confirmed that the sewer fund is in good condition. Mr. Clark inquired about the water fund. Ms. Collene informed him that the cash balance in the water fund is \$25,000. Mr. Clark further questioned the salary line items, including wages and benefits. Funds had been transferred out of those

line items. While Mr. Clark understands Ms. Collene's explanation regarding the month-to-month cash flow, he noted that if wage increases are approved, it would amount to two payrolls per month at 3%, which is insignificant. Mr. Clark said he believes a wage increase would not impact the monthly cash balance. Ms. Collene responded that she would not continue to reiterate what she had already explained. Mr. Clark remarked that there should not be an issue with the fund based on a 3% wage increase. Ms. Collene reiterated that it is not her decision to approve a wage increase; that responsibility lies with Council. Mr. Clark asked once more if there is sufficient funding in the budgeted line item to accommodate a 3% wage increase. Ms. Collene clarified that she has gone by the amended certificate, and as a result, the electric fund is a definite no, while the water fund is very tight. As a Fiscal Officer, Ms. Collene is not comfortable with a 3% wage increase. Ms. Collene mentioned that if the anticipated revenue fails to be generated, we will need to implement adjustments by the year's end, potentially requiring the general fund to support the water fund. Ms. Collene cannot predict the outcome, and that is why it's important to have a month's cushion in the cash balance. Ms. Collene is working towards achieving this for all expenses related to the water fund, not just for payroll.

The mayor announced a 5-minute recess at 7:20 pm, during which no discussions were to occur. The meeting was reconvened by the mayor at 7:25 pm.

Ms. Raftery inquired about the AMP BAN payment, the intended use of those funds, and whether there would be an increase in the water department's budget after the BAN is paid off. Ms. Collene clarified that the AMP BAN is paid from the electric fund and is paid on an annual basis rather than monthly. The budget that was approved allocated \$490,000 for the bond payment, but we also anticipated revenue coming back in. Since we are paying off the AMP BAN this year, the expected revenue will not materialize. The electric fund balance is expected to decrease. Next year, there will be no payment. Ms. Collene is not aware of any additional projects at this time.

Mr. Whitacre inquired about the monthly bitcoin payment and whether it is deducted from the electric fund. Ms. Beck responded that when the payment is received, it is directly returned to AMP. Ms. Collene explained that we receive an invoice from AMP, and the payments we receive are immediately redirected to AMP. Mr. Whitacre requested information regarding the outstanding balance owed to AMP. Ms. Collene explained that they bill us monthly based on our usage. The mayor asked if we are still in arrears with AMP. Ms. Beck indicated that she believes there is one more payment remaining on the arrears. Ms. Collene mentioned that at the end of the previous year, John Courtney had suggested postponing one of the payments to increase our cash balance due to the debt limit. Last month, Ms. Collene instructed Ms. Beck to pay the bill covering a month and a half. We hope to repeat this soon, which would pay the arrears in full.

Ms. Raftery inquired of Ms. Collene whether we would be in a stronger financial position in three months, given these figures. Ms. Collene responded that, ideally, what we require and what she aspires to achieve is a three-year forecast. This forecast will consider forthcoming projects, revenue, expenses, and the sources of funding. Ms. Raftery also asked if we would allocate funds for capital expenses again. Ms. Collene mentioned that Bonnie had been transferring funds to the capital projects, but this year, the funds were insufficient to facilitate the transfer. Ms. Raftery then asked Mr. Gray if he anticipates any non-emergency projects that will need to be addressed. Mr. Gray indicated that we need to construct the express circuit to the new solar field this year, a topic that has already been discussed. Ms. Raftery inquired if he had a current estimate, to which Mr. Gray replied that he does not have one at this time. We have around \$390,000 available to cover the costs. Ms. Collene noted that we had budgeted \$435,000, believing it was based on an estimate we had previously received. Mr. Gray added that the

cost has decreased slightly in the last two weeks, and we might have some flexibility when it is reviewed again in the coming weeks. Ms. Collene informed the committee that she was not made aware of any changes that had occurred in the last two weeks with that estimate.

Elisa inquired whether the budget sheets had been considered previously when wage increases were granted. Ms. Raftery mentioned that they were previously provided with limited information, not to the extent that Ms. Collene has shared. Mr. Whitacre stated that Council is certainly more engaged and better informed this time around, since Ms. Collene's arrival. Mr. Clark questioned why the wage increase is not being implemented if the funds are available. Mr. Miller asked who was responsible for making that recommendation. Ms. Raftery clarified that it is Council that would need to make that recommendation. The mayor explained that when someone approaches Council to request a wage increase, Council consults with the fiscal officer to determine if the budget can accommodate it, and then Council makes the final decision. Mr. Clark is present this evening because he believes there are sufficient funds for a raise, while Ms. Collene disagrees, and ultimately, the decision lies with Council. It is not a decision for Ms. Collene, Mr. Gray, Mr. Clark, or the mayor to make; it rests with the six Council members. Ms. Schlacter expressed that she does not see a basis for making a recommendation to grant a wage increase at this time and asked if the matter could be revisited later. Ms. Raftery indicated that if a wage increase is granted in the future, one option could be to make it retroactive to a specific date, depending on the budget's sustainability. Ms. Collene indicated that these are options. In October 2011, a wage increase was granted, but it was not retroactive to the beginning of the year. Wage increases were not granted in 1998, 2004, 2010, 2012, and 2014. Mr. Clark inquired about the reason for combining all departments and not providing a wage increase. Mr. Whitacre mentioned that if he is interpreting the monthly bank statements correctly, the payroll amounts to around \$50,000. He questioned whether a 3% raise would be equal to 3% of \$50,000. Mr. Clark advised no, as employees are paid from various departments. He explained that for the water and wastewater, Mr. Whitacre would calculate 3% of the four employees in those departments and then divide that figure by two, given that there are two departments involved. Mr. Clark asked if Council feels uncertain about addressing all of the departments now, and asked if they could separate the departments, grant a wage increase to the water and wastewater department, and potentially provide increases to the other departments later, retroactively if they choose. This same kind of increase was done in January 2026 for the police department. If the budget allows for the water and wastewater departments to receive an increase, why should they not receive their raises now, while the other departments can receive theirs later? Chief clarified to Mr. Clark that the police department does not receive wage increases based on certification achievements as the other departments do. There is no established standard for an officer to attain qualifications. Chief cautioned that Mr. Clark is speaking outside of what he should when referring to the police department.

(During this stage of the meeting, multiple discussions were taking place among the attendees, making it difficult to accurately transcribe the minutes.) Ms. Collene noted that there are two conversations taking place and that minutes cannot be generated in this manner.

Mr. Clark expressed that he is seeking a wage increase for the water and wastewater departments and does not see the justification for delaying this request. Ms. Collene inquired about Council's preferred course of action. Mr. Clark mentioned that if other departments are unable to accommodate a wage increase, at the very least, the water and wastewater departments should receive a wage increase if the budget allows for it. Ms. Beck remarked that Ms. Collene has a great deal of education and expertise regarding fiscal issues, and ultimately, she is striving to communicate the figures to Council so they can make an informed decision. Ms. Collene said she has made every effort to clarify all the details and

respectfully requested that Council decide in order to conclude the matter this evening. Ms. Raftery asked the Council members if anyone had a clear perspective on how to move forward at this time. Ms. Schlachter indicated that she needs to understand how a wage increase would impact the budget before making any recommendations. Ms. Collene confirmed that she can provide that information to Council. Mr. Clark stated that he has documentation showing the figures for a 3% wage increase, which he can share. He clarified that he is not suggesting that other departments should not receive raises, but he wants to ensure that the water and wastewater departments do not miss out on increases simply because another department lacks the funds to provide them. Mr. Ehrman inquired whether funds could be transferred from one department to another, to which Ms. Collene responded that this is absolutely not permissible. Ms. Raftery proposed that a two-week moratorium be placed on this issue, with further discussions to take place at the next regular Council meeting. In the interim, Ms. Collene can provide Council with any necessary information.

There being no other finance business to come before them, the meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Eunice A. Collene, Fiscal Officer

The minutes of this meeting were recorded by Administrative Specialist Heather Alicea. Fiscal Officer Eunice A. Collene examined them for both form and content and subsequently approved them as transcribed.