

Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Finance and Appropriations Committee Meeting

November 12, 2024

Members: Mary Nichols-Rhodes, Chair
Mike Brillhart, Vice Chair
Meika Penta, Brian Ashton, Joe Siegfert

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes called the meeting to order at 6:42 p.m. All members were present.

Legislation Discussed

Temp. Ord. A-105

Discussion:

Temp. Ord. A-105

An ordinance establishing annual appropriations of money for the current expenses, capital expenditures, and other expenses of the City of Cuyahoga Falls for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2025, and declaring an emergency.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if there were comments or questions from the Committee, the Rail, and the public regarding the Budget presentation at the last Finance Committee Meeting. There were none.

Street Construction, Maintenance and Repair Fund (Page 223)

Revenues - \$255,924 increase. This is mostly related to the projected increase of State Levied Shared Taxes group +\$91,113 (Gasoline Excise (43010), Gasoline Excise - Added (43011), Motor Vehicle License (43012), and IRP Compensation Distribution (43013)), coupled with an increase in Operating Transfers-In from the General Fund +\$200,000 due to additional expenses in the fund. Increases are offset with a decrease in Cable Television Franchise Fees (46000) -\$50,000. With the recent popularity of streaming services, cable franchise fees have continued to decline. The last three complete years of this revenue source for 2021, 2022, and 2023 was \$609,433.79, \$577,644.52, and \$538,792.50, respectively, and current year is trending to be \$499,557.

Personal Services - \$695,154 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase and increase in benefits that are primarily related to pension and Medicare on increase in salaries and wages, and Insurance

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Medical/Dental (51104), and Vision +8.3%. Additionally, we are funding the 2025 Leaf Pickup program with this fund, as resources in the Storm Drainage Utility Fund are being dedicated to capital projects.

Operations expenditures - \$60,429 increase. Increase is mostly due to Temporary Labor (54007) +\$110,010. As noted above, we are funding the 2025 Leaf Pickup Program in this fund, which includes temporary employees through our temporary staffing agency, coupled with pay rate increases. Increase offset with reductions, most notably Internal Service direct charges - Garage (54505) -\$87,866, due to the decrease in the proportionate share of garage charges.

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Mr. Charles Novak, Street Commissioner, stated that they are going into winter in great shape. Their salt costs have come down since last year. The equipment is ready for winter. Next summer, they have budgeted for all the road patching and crack sealing they do. There will be more emphasis on striping. Their department stripes in house.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that, according to the summary, revenue is going to be increased. There is some increase in Personal Services and Operations Expenditures. They are funding the 2025 Leaf Pickup Program in the fund and it includes temporary employees through a temporary staffing agency, so that accounts for some of the costs. Mr. Novak stated that is correct.

Mr. Balthis stated that with the change in the Leaf Pickup Program and funding it out of this program, they are taking part of the burden off of the Storm Water Fund.

Mr. Hoffman stated that the Leaf Program runs about \$350,000 to \$375,000 depending on various factors with weather being a related factor. They have been able to fund the Leaf Program through the one-man leaf machine for the last several years which has been a big help especially on temporary labor. As they looked at revenues, they have funded the Leaf Program out of the Storm Water Fund. Since they have had good years and strong revenues, they felt it appropriate to run it out of the Street Maintenance and Repairs Department, allowing them to have funds available for the other projects in the city.

Mr. Balthis stated that the leaf removal has been funded out of the Storm Water Fund, but it makes more sense to keep those funds available for water capital improvements and to push it to the Street Department. He asked what the experience has been with the one-man machines and leasing these machines versus purchasing. Mr. Hoffman stated that in this budget, they still plan on purchasing the one-man leaf machines. They have about seven machines at this point in time. They are trying to continue to add those one-man machines. They have had good experience with them. They still need to have some temporary labor for raking and cleanup. They continue to plan on running it out the Street Construction Maintenance and Repair Fund as long they have enough revenue.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if there were comments or questions from the Committee, the Rail, and the public regarding the Street Construction, Maintenance and Repair Fund.

State Highway Improvement Fund (Page 231)

Revenues - \$5,500 increase. This increase is entirely related to the projected increase of State Levied Shared Taxes group (Gasoline Excise (43010), Gasoline Excise - Added (43011), Motor Vehicle License (43012), and IRP Compensation Distribution (43013)). For these revenue items, Ohio Revised Code allocates 92.5% to S.C.M.R. and 7.5% to State Highway Improvement.

Operations expenditures - (\$140,000) decrease, related to Rock Salt (54103). This is due to the decrease in salt prices, and current inventory level from recent mild winters.

Capital Outlay - \$110,000 increase, which is related to Infrastructure (55015) +\$250,000 for the allocation of funds for street resurfacing. We traditionally use this fund and Municipal License

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Tax Fund for rock salt, with any additional need coming from S.C.M.R. Fund. However, due to the decrease in salt needed for 2025, coupled with fund balance (\$217,798 as of 9/30/2023) we are able to fund street resurfacing from these resources in 2025. The accounting for this will be similar to the Permissive Tax Fund, where expenses are redirected to the fund, from Capital Projects fund at the end of the year.

Mr. Hoffman stated that this fund and the Municipal License Fund are funded in revenues through gasoline excise taxes and motor vehicle license taxes. Historically, the City has only purchased road salt out of those two funds. Because they are at topped-off level with salt and the price of salt has come down and they have experienced mild winters over the last couple years, they are proposing directing \$250,000 out of the Street Highway Improvement Fund in 2025 and, hopefully, be able to do that in the future, as well, to fund street paving and street improvements into the Capital Projects Fund.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if there were comments or questions from the Committee, the Rail, and the public regarding the State Highway Improvement Fund.

Municipal License Tax Fund (Page 235)

Revenues - \$3,000 projected decrease associated with License Surtax- Addition (43009).

Operations expenditures - \$5,000 increase, which is related to the share of Rock Salt (54103), from this fund based on available resources. This increase will reduce the need for salt from State Highway Improvement Fund (202), so we can use those resources for street resurfacing.

Sanitation Fund (Page 237)

Revenues - \$107,600 increase. This mostly relates to the Charges for Services - Residential (45001)

+ \$50,000 due to current year revenue trends, as this account is \$61,818 in excess of budget as of 9/30/2024. Additionally, Recycling Rebate (49129) +\$45,000. This account is projected to recover in 2025 due to the current market conditions for recycled material. We did not anticipate receiving rebates in 2024, but have received \$43,259.33 as of 9/30/2024.

Personal Services - \$216,750 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase and increase in benefits that are primarily related to pension and Medicare on increase in salaries and wages, and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Vision +8.3.

Operations expenditures - (\$36,122) decrease, mostly related to Refuse Containers (52041) - \$77,610 as we are anticipating purchasing less containers in 2025 due to current inventory.

Capital Outlay - \$610,000 increase primarily related Vehicles (55025) +\$608,000. Department vehicle needs change from one year to another, and we are planning to purchase a new Front

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Loader Refuse Truck for \$515,000 in 2025. We purchased a pre-owned Rear Loader Refuse Truck in 2024 for \$165,000, which attributes to increase in the account in 2025.

Mr. Novak stated that Sanitation is similar to Street. They are going to continue with everything they are doing there. On the recycling end of it, they were fortunate to have a good market year for recyclable materials, so they actually have revenue this year. They will be in year three of a five-year contract through Republic to manage the items they collect off the curbs. The processing costs will go up and the glass charges will go up, but, hopefully, they will get revenue for next year. On the trash side of it, they are in year three of a five-year contract. Those rates are set by contract, but, fortunately, when they went out to bid, they got some long-term deals. They had all four of the closest companies all bidding for their materials, so they got some good rates. Waste Management got that contract. Besides Personal Services going up, the cost of the equipment has been going up the last several years. That is out of their control and something they are trying to work on by trying to check with a lot of different vendors out there to get cost comparisons. They are watching their own operational budget to make sure they save every dollar they can.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes thanked Mr. Novak for mentioning the recycling materials. It is noted that they did not anticipate any rebates, but have received \$43,269 as of September 30, so that is great. Regarding Capital Outlay, they are planning to purchase of a new front-loader refuse truck in 2025. Mr. Novak stated that in Sanitation, they purchase two large trucks every year. They have small trucks and containers. Every so often, they need a new truck. This year coming up is one of those years. They get to buy three trucks.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that the rear refuse truck that is in use sounds like a bargain at \$175,000. Mr. Novak stated that it is very much needed and will be extremely useful in the years to come.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if there were comments or questions from the Committee, the Rail, and the public regarding this the Sanitation Fund.

Mr. Balthis stated that it is great news on the fund that they didn't anticipate recycling. He asked if they generate the revenue, are there plans or have they thought about other communication campaigns to the public so that they can help maximize revenue and contain costs. Mr. Novak stated that the price of oil drives it. When gasoline prices are high, there is more interest in recycling, so people don't have to buy virgin materials. Traditionally, when gas prices are coming down, then there is a market where the value of recycling will go down. That was one thing this year as far as the value of materials.

Mr. Novak stated that they are still looking at aluminum being their number one in value and clear plastic bottles being second in value. One and two plastic bottles and jugs are still high in value along with aluminum. When they went out to bid, they got a great deal with the recycle contract. As part of that, what they've agreed to is take their average composition that they have had for the previous four years, outside of the Covid year, and to just use that going forward. They don't really

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have the ability to do a full shutdown of their facility to run their product through it, so they chose to do it that way so that remains steady.

Mr. Brillhart asked if the Waste Management building that was approved for Akron would affect the City in any way. Mr. Novak stated that that would not affect them until their contract runs out and then they might use that facility, but, currently, that would not affect them.

Utility Billing Fund (Page 293)

Revenues - \$182,000 increase. This increase is due to Internal Service Charges (45401) to other City departments estimated to be \$128,000 greater in 2025, and Credit Card Processing Fee revenue account (46021) increase of \$31,000. This fund is an internal service fund, and operates under a cost recovery basis. Therefore, as expenses increase, cost recovery charged to other departments does as well. The Credit Card Processing Fee revenue account (46021) increase is due to an increase in the volume of accounts choosing to pay by credit card.

Personal Services - \$154,801 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase and increase in benefits that are primarily related to pension and Medicare on increase in salaries and wages, and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Vision +8.3.

Operations expenditures - \$19,513 increase, which is mostly due to Banking Fees (53004) +\$17,460, relating to increased volume of customers using the on-line payment option, and Internal Service direct charges - Garage (54505) +\$8,770, due to the increase in the proportionate share of garage charges, offset by other various account reductions.

Capital Outlay - \$7,600 increase is related to the planned replacement of the department's copier, which meets our City's threshold for capitalization >\$5,000.

Mr. Will Bezbatchenko, Utility Billing Manager, stated that their budget is mostly personnel, the people that prepare the bills and perform other office work. There is expected to be an increase in expense in credit card fees simply because the trend is more people are using cards to pay their utility bills. They do pay a \$2.90 charge for each card transaction, but that is to cover Utility Billing's costs for that service. Their share of the garage use is growing a little bit so you can see that as well. That will continue to increase. They are pretty stagnant on costs. They are not increasing anything. The only big purchase is a copier, but, other than that, it is pretty much the status quo year to year.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if the cost for customers to use the online payment is staying the same. Mr. Bezbatchenko stated that they have no plans to increase that fee as of right now.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if there were comments or questions from the Committee, the Rail, and the public regarding this the Utility Billing Fund.

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Police (Page 155)

Personal Services - \$1,378,555 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase and increase in benefits that are primarily related to pension and Medicare on increase in salaries and wages, and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Vision +8.3. Additionally, due to overall growth of the City, we are requesting an additional Police Sergeant, and four Police Officers.

Operations expenditures - \$5,212 increase, primarily attributable to Non-Operating expense group Reserve: Sick Leave (54875) +\$21,248, and Reserve: Vacation +\$14,507 for the department's share of contributions to the Compensated Absences Fund (707). Department allocation is based on the compensated absences liability in the City's 12/31/2023 audited financial statements. Increase was offset by other various account reductions.

Transfers & Advances - \$280,000 increase, attributable to Transfers Out - General Operations (54701) to the Police Pension Fund (204) for pension associated with additional personnel costs.

The Police Department has several Special Revenue Funds under their management including Drug Law Enforcement Fund (Fund 214), Law Enforcement Trust Fund (215), Enforcement and Education Fund (217), Federal Law Enforcement Trust Fund (220), Law Enforcement Assistance Fund (222), and the newly created OneOhio Opioid Settlement Fund (228). The nature of these funds is to account for specific revenues that are legally restricted to expenditure for particular purposes. These funds are budgeted at the Chief's discretion based on restriction of use and available resources. The following fund descriptions are from excerpts from our City's Annual Financial Report, or Ordinance creating the fund:

Chief Norfolk stated that the Police Department has seen some major increases in Personal Services due to the additional growth in the city. They are requesting an additional police sergeant and four additional police officers to create a Special Operations Unit within the Police Department Uniform Division. They will be dealing with mental health issues and things that may follow police and fire, freeing up the patrol division. It will also help with ongoing public education, neighborhood ongoing efforts and concerns. That will leave one additional police officer that they are looking to increase the number of officers in the school system as a School Resource Officer. The police did see a decrease in costs. A lot of it has to do with contractual changes, such as clothing for employees. They have had completion of some renovation projects within the Police Department, so those have gone away as opposed to last year. One additional cost that has gone up is training. They are trying to emphasize internal and external training. They have had some increases in equipment costs and costs to do business every day. They are trying to be very responsible with how they allocate resources and how they spend money; for example, pursuing grants to subsidize some of these costs.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if the Training Center is still being used by other communities. Chief Norfolk stated that their revenue was about 25 percent. That correlates with the time the range was actually down for about three months at the beginning of this year. The HVAC system that cleans the air on the range had some filters that had reached capacity. They found that those filters

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have to be made to order, so they had to wait for the filters to be made and then wait for a service technician to fly in and change out the filters, because they are hazardous materials. The range is being rented out by local, state and federal organizations.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked how often Police Department training occurs in the facility. Chief Norfolk stated that they conduct all 25 weeks of their training there. Cuyahoga Falls officers are there for another 12 to 16 weeks a year, so they use the facility a lot.

Mr. Hoffman stated that the rent for the facility is located on page 32 of the budget. It is budgeted as \$40,000, for 2025, in revenue. The Police Training Center, while it does do some good in training officers, is not only for the City's police officer department and for other communities. They have always looked at it as a regional asset and it has grown into a large regional asset. One of the other benefits that is not always captured in the budget is how it brings in people from the Northeast Ohio region that might not otherwise visit the City of Cuyahoga Falls. Training here gives them a reason to see things and visit restaurants and maybe even come back one day.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if they anticipate people already in the department moving into the new positions. Chief Norfolk stated that his plan is to take veteran officers to move into the positions and the new officers will back the Patrol Division. They have received comments from instructors at the training centers about what a great experience they had. Even a lot of people from out-of-state regions talk about wanting to come back.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if there were comments or questions from the Committee, the Rail, and the public regarding this the Police Fund.

Mr. Balthis stated that there is also the savings of not having to pay for the City's officers to travel to other training centers and having to get hotels in other communities. He strongly supports the addition of the new officers and the increase in the focus on training. He also appreciates the idea having them backfilling and focusing on problem areas and putting this team together to focus helping people with mental health issues and things like that. Chief Norfolk stated that they currently work a lot with Community Support Services. They were doing a great job with them dedicating a counselor to come out with them on calls. Unfortunately, they are seeing it taper with the counselor. He does not know why that is, but that is the reality they are facing. They attempt to make partnerships with Community Support Services and Probate Court.

Mr. Balthis asked if, when available, Chief Norfolk could share with Council response times. His understanding is that they are pretty competitive and faster than most communities. Chief Norfolk stated that he will get him that information.

Mr. Ashton stated that he is in favor of the additional officers. He asked if it is more neighborhood disputes, Temporary Protection Orders or Rule 6 that generally take more time in the day. Chief Norfolk stated that they are things that do not require one visit by the police, but require lengthy investigation.

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Mayor Walters stated that City revenues are good. They want to highlight the Police and Fire safety forces. They are adding almost \$1.4 million to Police and then \$1.6 million to Fire, and that's for additional staffing because they have the luxury of being able to do that. The Chiefs and he talk about being proactive all the time. They would like to get there beforehand and solve those problems and disputes before they get the call. The addition of funds and officers will help them to do that before they have to respond with the regular officers on the street.

Drug Law Enforcement Fund - 214 (Page 167)

To account for fines received by the City that are restricted under the Ohio Revised Code to subsidize law enforcement efforts that pertain to drug offenses.

Law Enforcement Trust Fund - 215 (Page 171)

To account for proceeds from the sale of contraband that are restricted to subsidizing law enforcement efforts.

Enforcement and Education Fund - 217 (Page 175)

To account for proceeds realized from fines to pay only those costs incurred in enforcing Section 4511.19 of the Ohio Revised Code or a substantially similar municipal ordinance and in educating the public of laws governing the operation of a motor vehicle and the dangers of operation of a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol and other information relating to the operation of a motor vehicle and the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

Mr. Hoffman stated that these are special revenue funds in the Police Department. A lot of times, they purchase firearms and a small amount of training costs. Generally, every other year, they may buy a car. They are mostly revenue sources from court cases where they get something back. In this budget, they have small amounts through those small funds and they are directed by the Chief.

Federal Law Enforcement Trust Fund – 220 (Page 179)

To account for the subsidy received by the Police Department for its efforts pertaining to (1) complex investigations/prosecutions by the City's Police/Law Departments; (2) provision of technical training or expertise of a law enforcement nature for Police Department members; (3) provision of matching funds to obtain federal grants; and (4) for such other law enforcement purposes that are deemed appropriate.

Law Enforcement Assistance Fund - 222 (Page 181)

To account for the reimbursement of professional training costs for law enforcement officers. This is no longer being funded by the State of Ohio Attorney General, due to policy changes.

OneOhio Opioid Settlement Fund - 228 (Page 183)

This was a new fund in 2022, authorized by Ordinance 84-2022. The purpose of which is to use settlement funds for evidence-based forward-thinking strategies, programming and services used to (i) expand the availability of treatment for individuals affected by substance use disorders, (ii) develop, promote, and provide evidence-based substance use prevention strategies, (iii) provide substance use avoidance and awareness education, (iv) decrease the oversupply of licit, and illicit

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opioids, and (v) support recovery from addiction services performed by qualified and appropriately licensed providers. Although specific plans have not been determined, we appropriated current fund balance of \$81,631 in Refunds and Reimbursements (54301), so funds are available for use.

The most notable changes to Police Special Revenue Funds were in the Drug Law Enforcement Fund (214) -\$18,100 related to safety equipment purchased in 2024; Law Enforcement Trust Fund (215) +\$10,500 mostly for cruiser trunk storage equipment, and OneOhio Opioid Settlement Fund (228) +\$231,013 due to additional resources from settlements.

Communications (Page 163)

Operations expenditures - \$172,520 increase, which mostly related to Miscellaneous Contractual Services (54005) for contractual costs of the COG.

Mayor Walters stated that he is on the Board of the COG. This past Thursday was one year since they have been in operation. They can now text 911. There have been a huge positives that have come out of this conglomeration. The center usually had staffing of two, sometimes three people. They now have a minimum of 10, sometimes 12 people working at one time. To see what they are doing is amazing. There has been a reduction in response times as well because it used to have to get handed off. Now, it is all seamless.

Chief Norfolk stated that they has heard from the officers on the road that they have seen a great increase in operational efficiency, especially the things that are multi-jurisdictional. It is significantly better.

Mr. Hoffman stated that they meet regularly as the Finance Committee for the Council of Government and are always reviewing costs. They do use the County's services for some of the personnel. They use their HR Department for those HR functions. They work closely with the finance directors and the representatives from the community in the COG and they have seen considerable interest from the communities that are not part of this possibly looking to make a move. They are starting to see more interest, which is going to help costs for them. It has been a positive thing for us from a finance perspective.

Mr. Balthis stated that one of the things that he thought was particularly important with the COG was the additional training opportunity for their dispatchers. There was going to be a specific position whose purpose was going to be training.

Chief Norfolk stated that there is significantly more training. The operations of the dispatch center in the COG as compared to the former dispatch center or really any dispatch center other than the cost is they have a room built out with practice dispatch stations. That's where they train in a controlled environment with a trainer, a former dispatcher from Cuyahoga Falls. Training is significantly enhanced as opposed to what it used to be.

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Fire (Page 185)

Personal Services - \$1,620,998 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase and increase in benefits that are primarily related to pension and Medicare on increase in salaries and wages, and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Vision +8.3. Additionally, due to overall growth of the City, we are requesting an additional six Firefighters.

Operations expenditures - \$258,064 increase. Increases in the following accounts: Clothing (53013) +\$10,000, and Clothing – Safety (53014) +\$27,000 related to the planned hiring of additional Firefighters; Office Equipment (53032) +\$11,000 for iPads; Tools & Equipment (53047) +\$25,000 for thermal imagers; Internal Service direct charges - Garage (54505) +\$50,000, due to the increase in the proportionate share of garage charges; Non-Operating expense group Reserve: Sick Leave (54875) +\$83,429, and Reserve: Vacation (54876) +\$32,255 for the department's share of contributions to the Compensated Absences Fund (707). Department allocation is based on the compensated absences liability in the City's 12/31/2023 audited financial statements.

Transfers & Advances - \$395,000 increase, attributable to Transfers Out - General Operations (54701) to the Fire Pension Fund (205) for pension associated with additional personnel costs.

Chief Martin stated that they have had a great year in 2024. When they look at 2025, they are excited about the additional personnel they are going to see with Council approval. The cost of turnout gear is expensive. Their gear is specialized. Just the uniforms alone are specialized and expensive. The thermal imagers in the fleet are at the end of their life, so that would be a purchase for next year. They are excited for the future and support in building the best fire department imaginable.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if they anticipate challenges recruiting. Chief Martin stated that the sign up for their entrance exams over the last five or six years have still been over 100. That's a far cry from when he got hired, but they are far and above higher than every other department in the area as far as getting people for their tests. Their process is strict. They are in the process right now, and every step of the way, they will lose about half the candidates. They get five out of the hundred that will get to the interview and actually be considered for employment. It is difficult for them to get to that point but they will not enter into a situation where they hire people to fill seats. They have to meet their standards. With the addition of personnel and the training center, he thinks that number is going to go way up in the future. They are fast becoming a destination force.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if there were comments or questions from the Committee, the Rail, and the public regarding the Fire Fund.

Mr. Brillhart stated that he donated a couple of antique fire trucks. It was a privilege this summer to spend some time at the fire station. He has been impressed by how the staff is and to be there and meet with the people and see what a cool, calm panel of experts and public servants they are.

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Mr. Balthis asked how best they would utilize the additional staff. Chief Martin stated that they are different with their 24/48. They need to hire groups of three. They are going to build a unit. They hope to restore the unit that they had prior to 2006 and they are hoping they will be hosting that at Station 3 and more central to the whole city. The way it would be utilized is a different than a conventional fire unit. It would be available full time for fire response. It would be a second unit in on busier medical calls. It could run service calls. It saves the other stations from sending their resources, so it maintains all of the other four stations in their districts, which is a huge help.

Building and Grounds Maintenance (Page 213)

Personal Services - \$22,824 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase and increase in benefits that are primarily related to pension and Medicare on increase in salaries and wages, offset by a reduction in Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Vision from employee health plan selections, and budgeted replacements being different than what was budgeted in the prior year.

Operations expenditures - \$40,059 increase, which is mostly due to Temporary Labor (54007) +38,016 related to pay rate increases for temporary employees through our staffing agency.

Mr. John Ball, Building and Grounds Superintendent, stated that, as far as budget, they have had a small increase in revenues. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that the Operations Expenditures amount of \$40,000 is mostly due to temporary labor, so they are using people on all the buildings and grounds with that. Mr. Ball stated that that is correct.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if there were comments or questions from the Committee, the Rail, and the public regarding Building Grounds Maintenance.

Engineering (Page 205)

Personal Services - \$208,397 increase. Cost of living (COLA) increase and increase in benefits that are primarily related to pension and Medicare on increase in salaries and wages, and Insurance - Medical/Dental (51104), and Vision +8.3. Additionally, a portion of the increase is from employee health plan selection being different than what was budgeted in the prior year.

Operations expenditures - \$10,239 increase. Increase is primarily attributable to Training and Education (53015) +\$1,800 for additional staff training, Computer System Support (54004) +\$2,101 for general increases, Telephone (54225) +\$2,000 for vehicle location services, and Non-Operating expense group Reserve: Sick Leave (54875) +\$1,907, and Reserve: Vacation +\$487 for the department's share of contributions to the Compensated Absences Fund (707), which is increasing from \$750,000 to \$1,000,000. Department allocation is based on the compensated absences liability in the City's 12/31/2023 audited financial statements.

Mr. Tony Demasi, City Engineer, stated that they are proud of each and every one of the folks that work with him in his department. This year alone they managed over \$35 million worth of projects being short one engineer and still short one aide. Similar to the safety forces, he has a test that

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represents what they do every day. They have been understaffed, but they are hoping that they will find people to fill the two openings. In Engineering, training is incredibly important, not only for the new folks that they hope to bring on, but also for the folks that they currently have. They want to continue to make sure that they are trained in everything that they do, safety not the least of which, but also the everyday things that they do. They look for opportunities through ODOT. A lot of them are free, so they look at them as well. They are excited for another year of hard work.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that they certainly want people who are inspecting bridges and such to be well trained.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked if there were comments or questions from the Committee, the Rail, and the public regarding Engineering.

Mr. Balthis stated that they appreciate how much work he does applying for funds and getting funds from different sources to help invest in their local infrastructure and take the burden off of taxpayers. It really pays off and makes a difference.

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.