

LOUDONVILLE VILLAGE COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

April 13, 2020

Loudonville Village Council met for a Council Committee of the Whole on Monday, April 13, 2020 at 6 p.m. via teleconference (Zoom Meeting ID: 412644065) Council President Pro Tempore Welsh called the meeting to order. Answering roll call were Mr. Bill Welsh, Mr. Tom Young, Mr. Jason Van Sickle, Mr. Tom Gallagher, Mrs. Cathy Lance, and Mr. Matt Young. Also in attendance at the meeting were Village Solicitor Thom Gilman, Fiscal Officer Elaine Van Horn, Fire Chief Mike Carey, and EMS Coordinator Dan Robinson. Others joining the meeting were James Black, Brandon Biddinger, and Craig Obrecht.

Councilman Welsh initiated discussion on the Fire/EMS contracts, noting the current contracts expire on June 30, 2021. Councilman Welsh stated that in light of the current health crisis surrounding the Covid-19 Coronavirus epidemic, he would like to recommend Council consider a 5-year contract with no increase in years one, two and three, but suggested an increase in years four and five of the contract.

Councilman Tom Young stated he was not comfortable keeping the contract at the same rate for the first three years, explaining he would prefer to look at it again next year. He also stated that if there is less revenue from EMS runs, additional income tax is needed to support the EMS fund. He stated that school employees receive 8-9 hours of coverage for their income tax paid while the townships have 24-hour coverage. He expressed concern with the increase in the dispatching contract with Holmes County. He stated he did not have a problem with no increase for the first year of the contract, but does not want to wait until the 4th year to increase the per household rate.

Councilman Van Sickle thanked Councilman Gallagher for the information he had put together. He stated that he had talked with several township trustees who had indicated to him that they would start looking elsewhere for their Fire/EMS protection if Loudonville proposes another increase that they did not agree with. He further commented that he was in favor of an increase of \$10 per year per household in years four and five of the contract.

Councilman Gallagher stated that he felt the contract should be increased each year, explaining that it is very difficult and costly to start up a Fire/EMS department. He explained that the townships need to share more equitably in the cost of operating the Fire/EMS departments. He cited an example from several years ago of a Washington Township resident who paid \$175 per year for their fire levy to Western Holmes Fire District, but the Fire District was only paying the Village \$75 per year for that household.

Councilwoman Lance stated she was in favor of a 5-year contract with an increase after year three. She expressed concern with the possible hardships that residents of both the Village and the townships could be facing. She noted that the Village receives additional revenue from the township residents because they are hard-billed.

Councilman Matt Young also thanked Councilman Gallagher for the information he presented. He stated that after he gathered information from the County Auditor, the Village Fiscal Officer and the State of Ohio, he felt that the \$190 per household that Councilman Gallagher used in his example could be more of an exception than an average. He noted that his research found that the most recent property value average for the Village was noted to be about \$91,200, which would generate a property tax from the fire levy of about \$47. He stated the average annual income per resident was \$38,715 with the .25% income tax rate generating about \$97 in income tax. He stated that using those current averages calculates an example of about \$144 per household for Village residents, which he felt was significantly lower than the \$190 example previously discussed. He also noted that the hard-billing vs soft-billing concerns continue to make it difficult to quantify without uncertainty who is paying more. He noted that he did not want to lose the township contracts and was in favor of leaving them at the \$90/household for the first three years of the new five-year contract and then increasing them for the last two years of the contract.

Fire Chief Carey shared that he believes that because of efficient management in his department, he continues to show an increase in his carryover balances. He also noted that streamlining of many functions in his departments has expenses trending lower each year. He stated that if Council decides to increase the fire contracts each year, he would like the additional revenue that is generated but not spent on operating each year to remain in his department.

To clarify how the contract amount was computed, Solicitor Gilman explained that before the contracts were initially drafted, the Fire Department leadership at that time wanted to use a lump sum amount that

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was generated based on a set rate per household multiplied by the number of houses in the townships at that time. Councilman Gallagher concurred and noted that the last time the contracts were done, he was able to total the houses. He stated he would like to see the contracts consistently go up each year, with Councilman Tom Young concurring. Discussion ensued regarding how and when the contracts should be increased given the different levy cycles in the townships that are unknown. Mayor Stricklen noted that it is important for the townships to know the result of the five-year contract so they can plan ahead. Councilman Welsh asked whether the group would like to continue discussion at the next Council meeting. Councilman Tom Young stated that he did not see a reason to wait and suggested Council vote on the suggestion to keep it the same the first three years and increase it by \$10 per household in each of the last two years of the contract and then move on. He then went on to suggest that the Council instead consider adding the increase of \$10 per household every other year, with Councilman Van Sickle stating he would not be opposed to that. Solicitor Gilman asked for clarification so that he could prepare legislation for the next Council meeting, noting that adding the increase in middle years of the contract will not have the same outcome as adding it the last two years of the contract, further asserting that he was not announcing a position, he just needed clarification. Councilman Welsh moved to authorize the Solicitor Gilman to prepare legislation for the contract that would keep the rate the same as it currently is for the first three years of the new contract and adding \$10 per household in year four and another \$10 per household in year five. Second by Councilman Van Sickle. A roll call vote upon said motion resulted as follows:

Bill Welsh, yes; Jason Van Sickle, yes; Tom Young, no;
Cathy Lance, yes; Tom Gallagher, no; Matt Young, yes. Motion carried.

ADJOURN: With no further business to be brought before the Council Committee of the Whole, Councilman Welsh moved the meeting be adjourned at 6:39 PM. Second by Councilman Van Sickle. A roll call upon said motion resulted as follows:

Bill Welsh, yes; Jason Van Sickle, yes; Tom Young, yes;
Cathy Lance, yes; Tom Gallagher, yes; Matt Young, yes. Motion carried.

Fiscal Officer

Mayor