

COTTAGE GROVE CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION MINUTES
OCTOBER 22, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Jeff Gowing called the virtual meeting to order at 9:08 am in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

ROLL CALL

City Recorder Trudy Borrevik called the roll. The following were

PRESENT IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS:	Mayor Jeff Gowing and Councilors Kenneth Michael Roberts, Chalice Savage and Mike Fleck
PRESENT VIA GOTOMEETING:	Councilors Jon Stinnett, Greg Ervin and Candace Solesbee (9:20)
COUNCIL ABSENT:	None
STAFF PRESENT IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS:	City Recorder Trudy Borrevik
STAFF PRESENT VIA GOTOMEETING	City Manager Richard Meyers, Assistant to the City Manager Jake Boone, Public Works & Development Director Faye Stewart, Finance Director Roberta Likens and City Engineer Ron Bradsby
CITY ATTORNEY:	None
MEDIA PRESENT:	None

City Manager Richard Meyers said the work session was to have a discussion on what the City should do with the American Recovery Plan (ARP) money the City will receive.

Richard said City would receive two payments of \$1,161,562.89 each, one in 2021 and one in 2022 which must be spent or encumbered by December 31, 2024. He said there were very specific guidelines of what the money could be used for.

Richard went over what the money could be used for. He said it could be used for water and sewer projects which had other guidelines associated with those and one that specifically stood out was that it had to have something to do with reducing climate impact. He said transportation

and road projects were not included. Broadband was included to improve services and provide a symmetrical service of 100 megabytes up and down at least. He said staff was looking for better definitions for broadband because there was a parameter that said you had to use it in areas where the broadband was less than a 25 megabyte service. He said because of the City's Wi-Fi and the fiber that had already been installed and Charter providing services, the City was above the threshold but there were gaps. He said revenue could be replaced and was tied to the entire budget. He said the City had lost revenue in gas and room tax, however the State had replaced some of the lost gas tax revenue. He said the local gas tax didn't decrease very much however the room tax completely dropped. He said in order to calculate lost revenue, the entire budget had to be considered to determine if there was a loss and the City had no loss in the general fund.

Richard said the City had received a request for money from the School District for loss of revenue for the swimming pool. He said the pool was closed but they still had to keep the water heated, maintain the building, etc. He didn't believe, however, that they would be able to show the loss of revenue when the calculations were done of across the budget.

Richard said the funds could be used to pay a premium to employees who had worked during the pandemic which included private sector employees. He said it was one area to be cautious about and didn't think it was something the City wanted to do. He said all three of the union contracts expired in June, 2022 and he expected them to request premium pay for work during the pandemic.

Richard said things that could be included in the ARP funds were expenditures for health and services; homeless expenditures; mobile crisis facility programs; anything done for COVID mitigation or prevention; boosting industry or spending money for business or industries that were hard hit, specifically tourism and loan programs for businesses.

Richard said the City continued with expenditures from the original Cares Act funds such as gloves, masks, porta pottys, extra cleaning of restrooms, buildings, vehicles, etc., and Council Chamber virtual meeting equipment. He said the City would also continue to do air filtration in City buildings. He said the City would also be paying for all the expenditures for the Eugene Symphony concert, which was a hard hit industry, from the ARP funds which would be around \$30,000.

Richard said staff had some ideas and thoughts and would like to get an idea from the Council if they were acceptable and could be pursued. He said staff's thought was to use the ARP funds to pay for things that the City would have the assets and would continue beyond the 2024 deadline to spend the funds. He said the City was trying to work on putting together a mobile crisis team and program through the Police Department and South Lane Mental Health. He said it would continue after the money was gone and staff would continue to look for other funding sources to sustain the program.

Richard said staff had been visiting with the Chamber and trying to do things for businesses. He said the World Athletics Championships were in Eugene in July, 2022 and one of the weekends was also Bohemia Mining Days. He said the City and Chamber would like to do some advertising in the Travel Lane County Visitors Guide to enhance Cottage Grove's visibility. He

said the City and Chamber would like to help BMD promote the Ore Cart Races as the World Championship Ore Cart Races. He said doing something in the Travel Lane County Visitors Guide and enhancing tourism were acceptable with the ARP funding. He said there was also the suggestion to pay for all the ads that any business wanted to put in the Travel Lane County Visitors Guide.

Richard said the effluent line from the wastewater treatment plant satisfied the climate change and some of the restrictions in water and sewer. He said homeless issues were an approved expenditure and the property the City was purchasing or other solutions to put that together. He said the City would continue to pull money from Lane County and other sources to help with that.

Richard said the City would like to purchase a new saddle span for Bohemia Park. He said the current saddle span was a 2007 model that was purchased in 2014 and was in need of replacement. He said a new one was around \$63,000.

Richard asked Council if staff was moving in the right direction. He asked if Council wanted staff to look at capital projects outside of the normal, such as the new reservoirs, which was in the budget and staff was doing the plans for. He said one was priced at \$2.6M and some of the funds could be allocated to that, however all the mechanisms were in place to fund that project. He asked if Council wanted to do other projects that weren't already planned and/or budgeted for. He said one would be to install a bio-solids drying system at the wastewater plant. He said that would eliminate the need to have the bio-solids hauled to Sutherlin every month. He said that cost was continuing to increase every year and the owner has had some issues with DEQ. He said the City could dry the solids and make them available within the community.

Mayor Gowing asked about the mobile crisis response team and if it was going to be a response or pro-active. He said if staff could be hired to work with the homeless and interact on the streets and try to get them from being in that situation would be pro-active. He said being reactive would be for a counselor to try and talk them down from a situation, nothing was being done to address the issue.

Richard said it would be both and would definitely be reactive. He said there would be instances when someone would be needed to help with a reactive situation. He said many of the programs were once they were in some kind of housing or some kind of contact, then there would be the crisis team or those resources available on a more regular basis to be used on a daily basis.

Councilor Fleck said there were two organizations that were doing that currently, the County had street outreach programs and Looking Glass for Youth.

Councilor Ervin said he appreciated all the staff's time. He said something needed to be done that was visible and impactful for all the residents and bring back some pride in town and appreciation for where we live. He said beautification was coming to mind over and over. He said in the handout *Compliance and Reporting Guidance*, Page 19, #4. Aid to Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality or Other Impacted Industries he could think of a couple of projects that fit all of the language criteria. He said when the City was doing the housing needs analysis and study, a

lot of the subcommittee's concept was around the walkability and creating more community interaction in Cottage Grove. He said part of the narrowing down of the required size of structures was the concept that you could have community hubs and the walkability as part of that came into tourism and hospitality. He said he couldn't help but think it tied into the homeless issue as well and cleanliness. He said what if the City had a beautification project that didn't involve just City Staff but to get the community involved and coordinate them so there was ownership, investment and the chance to communicate and bring the community approach to enjoyment of where we live. He said sidewalks were on his mind, which was safety, tourism and potentially hospitality for getting to different areas of whether it was reconstruction or just cleaning, pressure washing, something to bring the aesthetic up and bring the whole mood up. He said he felt there needed to be something visible that everyone could all band together around and work from.

Richard said some of the things he mentioned staff had been trying to figure out how to do some of what you are saying but getting it to fit the specific criteria or projects. He said expanding and making broadband more readily available would be visible. He said if a new fiber line could be installed down Main Street and complete one of the loops and get a provider on hand working with the City to recruiting people to sign up a broadband service than Charter. He said with competition, it might bring the cost of broadband down. He said one thing highly visible was roads which the City couldn't do using ARP funds unless the City had done something to destroy the road like install a waterline. He said one thing staff had thought of was doing the northern portion of N. 16th Street. He said if the City dug a trench to repair a waterline, the road was destroyed and the City would have to rebuild the road as a part of the project and pay for some of the costs with ARP funds. He said the City could easily use all the money in one project and it wouldn't cover all of N. 16th Street. How do we use that wisely, spread it out and match with other funding. He said beautification of neighborhoods would be difficult justifying it as tourism unless there was the museum or some anchor which could be looked at and explored.

Councilor Solesbee said she agreed with Councilor Ervin on making it a very visible project, the community needed it right now. She said she also liked the idea of bringing money back into the community. She commented about South Lane Mental Health and their services and said she had heard they had 100 employees. She said living downtown, she had seen firsthand what goes on. She said the St. Vincent DePaul building housed quite a few people and the police were constantly intervening. She said the Police were kind and good with them but it took a lot of their time. She said she would like to see something happen with South Lane Mental Health so they could step in with situations as she didn't feel the Police and Ambulance crews were equipped. She said she also supported the purchase of a new saddle span.

Councilor Fleck said he liked a lot of the ideas. He said with a bio-solid dryer system, the product could be sold which was an ability to do something positive with the water, wastewater and storm system. He said he would like to see the City work towards an opportunity village model where people could be moved into a managed environment with an agency. He said if it were the agency he worked for, he would declare a conflict of interest. He said he knew there were concerns about drawing people into the community but he felt the problem was only going to get worse and the City had an opportunity to make an investment that was going to make a

difference. He said he also supported a mobile crisis facility program but had concerns that once the stimulus money was gone, there wouldn't be funding to support the program.

Mayor Gowing said one thing he had brought up in the past that he would like to see was installing exercise equipment along the bicycle trail. He said he had seen the equipment at vendor displays at the NLC Conferences.

Councilor Savage said she also agreed with Councilor Ervin about whatever the City did being visible. She said she liked the idea of the bio-solids but wasn't sure it would be received by the community in a way that was meaningful and impactful unless there was a deep reduction in the sewer bill. She said she recently drove through Reedsport and realized that the road was a state highway and not funded by the City, but the road entering town from Hwy 38 was clean and smooth and the sidewalks looked great with flowers all along the side. She said it was welcoming and gorgeous and came to her mind when Councilor Ervin talked about beautification in Cottage Grove. She said getting the community involved was important. She said she supported the mobile crisis unit and it was something that could be utilized as a reactive treatment but liked the idea of being proactive as it got to the root of the problem. She asked how the City impacted the community in a meaningful way so that those who needed mental health services had the opportunity to get it.

Councilor Roberts said there was a lot of good information in the packet provided to Council. He said in the packet it talked about support of agriculture economy and asked if it included local farms and if they had to be in the City limits.

Richard said with the new food hub, it didn't necessarily have to be. He said one thing on the list that he hadn't discussed was RAIN which had an annual expense. He asked they tied in with the local food suppliers and providers in the community and that's where the connection could be made. He said it was a business enhancement for those impacted by the pandemic. He said the City could fund the City's portion of the RAIN program and use the money budgeted for something else. He said the EBID had requested money to help fund the RARE program and the Cottage Grove Theater had requested money as they had been unable to open during the pandemic and were in the middle of a remodel. He asked if there would be any interest in entertaining a request from them or other local organizations. He said Council would need to set parameters for requests for funding.

Councilor Roberts said the reason he thought of the farms was because if he had learned anything from the pandemic, it was to have a larger supply of local food. He said he also liked the idea of reinvesting in innovative housing ideas, turning commercial properties into residential properties, developing focus strategy on affordable housing for skilled and trade workers, and stabilizing renters and homeowners. He said regarding Federal programs, he liked the idea of food programs and rental assistance. He said he would also like to see the City invest in a program to take the homeless and those in need and turn their lives around which would take bold and innovative decisions.

Councilor Ervin said he agreed with Councilor Roberts on the concept of getting the locality more sustainable from a food perspective. He said he also like the idea of anytime money was

distributed to organizations such as the WOE or BMD, that they advise the City how they are going to invest in the future for the good of Cottage Grove. He said regarding sidewalks, promoting walkability checked the lowering impact of driving. He said several years ago he attended a NLC Conference and a vendor advertised sidewalk grinding which didn't take care of the infrastructure, but it reduced tripping hazards which increased safety and walkability. He said stretching the dollars for continued impact over time was important. He said regarding the bio-solids, if the City could see a potential serious reduction in the utility bills, it would be visible, impactful and long lasting. He asked if the City could potentially receive bio-solids from other communities to create a major income generating source.

Councilor Stinnett said he agreed with Councilor Ervin about doing something visible within the community to showcase Cottage Grove's potential. He said the City could spearhead a beautification campaign that could start downtown and emanate out from there that could draw people together. He was in favor of shoring up broadband within the City. He was also in favor of spending some money on homeless issues.

Mayor Gowing said he thought broadband should be on the top of the list as there were Councilors having issues with their connectivity during the meeting. He said virtual meetings weren't going away.

Richard said what had been discussed would give staff good criteria and information to start putting packages together. He said some projects would be done that fit and bigger projects would be brought to Council for consideration. He said the overwhelming position of Council was investing in something visible for the community.

There being no further business, Mayor Gowing adjourned the meeting at 9:53 am.

Trudy Borrevik, City Recorder

Jeffrey D. Gowing, Mayor