

**DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL  
FINANCE COMMITTEE  
Tuesday, October 8, 2024– 4:30 p.m.  
5555 Perimeter Drive  
Council Chamber**

Meeting Minutes

Mr. Keeler called the Finance Committee meeting of October 8, 2024 to order at 4:30 p.m.

Committee members present: Mr. Keeler (Chair) and Vice Mayor Alutto. Mr. Reiner arrived at 5:02 p.m.

Staff members present: Mr. Stiffler, Mr. Earman, Ms. Gee, Ms. Steiner, Mr. Urbancsik, Ms. Hoffman, Ms. Murray, Ms. Goliver.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Keeler moved to approve the minutes of the June 10, 2024 Finance Committee meeting. Vice Mayor Alutto seconded the motion.

The motion passed by the following vote: Vice Mayor Alutto, yes; Mr. Keeler, yes.

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

Review of the City's Schedule of Fees and Service Charges for City of Dublin Services

Mr. Urbancsik reviewed the City's 2024 Comprehensive Cost Study. All fees were reviewed based on current cost recoveries, and increases were proposed to fees to bring them to their established cost recovery target. All changes can be found in the fee schedule and are listed in Appendix A of the ordinance. Ordinance 94-13 established alternate year inflationary increases to the annual Cost of Services Study. Inflationary measures take place in odd-numbered years, and the Comprehensive Cost Study takes place during even-numbered years. In 2021, the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommended this as a best practice. A Comprehensive Cost Study was performed in 2022, and in 2023 an inflationary measure of 4.25% was generally applied to fees in each department. In 2024, the Finance Department conducted a Comprehensive Cost Study. Staff began meeting with department directors to review fees in February 2024, and is planning for presentation to City Council in November, and implementation of the 2025 Fee Schedule on January 1, 2025.

Mr. Urbancsik reviewed notable changes by department.

*Engineering*

There are no proposed new fees. Increases are primarily based on staff wages and benefits increases.

*Parks*

There are increases in interment and inurnment services based on increased staff time. There is a new Grounds of Remembrance Dedication Stone Fee.

Vice Mayor Alutto asked if there was a Grounds of Remembrance fee previously. Mr. Urbancsik explained that it was a service the City offered, and it is now being added to the Cost Study.

*Police*

There is a \$10 increase for impounded abandoned vehicle release.

*Court Services*

There are no changes.

*Public Services*

There were minimal increases to fees for spilled load clean-up, damaged property repair, and fire hydrant permit.

*Partner Funding*

There is no change to the fuel surcharge. There is a .09 cent CNG surcharge based on the commodity cost. There is a \$5 in the Washington Township fleet maintenance from \$125/hour to \$130/hour.

*Planning*

A new fee structure is proposed for Plan and Plat review fees. PL-02 and PL-03 include the Planned Unit Development (PUD) fee components. These reviews require significantly more staff review time compared to standard reviews. For example, PUD residential major preliminary plan takes approximately two to three more staff hours compared to a regular Preliminary Plan review. Final Development Plan Review fees are adjusted to ensure additional staff hours required are appropriately captured. PL-11 and PL-12 Preliminary and Final Plat review removes the "no increase over 100 lots" and no increase over 50 residential units" verbiage.

*Building Standards*

The current target cost recovery of fees for services is set at 100%. In the interest of reaching Council's goals of 100% cost recovery, fees will need to reflect a 30% increase over 2024 fees for services. Historically, the Building Standards Division has recovered 100% of direct costs. The Division provides excellent customer service. 98% of inspections occur the same day. No other city in the area provides this level of customer service.

Vice Mayor Alutto asked if those numbers would change if the level of customer service were to change. Mr. Stiffler stated to change the cost of recovery, expenditures would have to lower. For example, a staff position could be eliminated, and then the service delivery could be examined. Staffing is not the only component but it is significant. Vice Mayor Alutto stated that if the division were to change the service level agreement with residents, it may postpone the need for additional staff. Mr. Stiffler stated that staff would take that into account if a request for a new inspector were to be received. Of all of the workforce struggles, this is one of the most challenging because there is a labor shortage and the position is very specialized. Many qualified individuals have spent their

career in the private sector and may not want to transition to the public sector. The City has had some success in cross training. A discussion could be held as to whether Dublin's standards are too high. The City is at the highest level of service with next-day inspections. A question could be asked if our business model is the most efficient to move forward. Dublin currently will do as many inspections as necessary. Some business models charge more after a certain number of inspections. Vice Mayor Alutto stated that it might be useful to review this model in an odd year to prepare for an actual review. Mr. Keeler stated that the goal is to recover 130%. Mr. Stiffler stated that 140% would be ideal. Mr. Keeler stated that staff has a good handle on service expenses. If no complaints are being received and the City is getting accolades for service, he sees no reason to review the level of service too in-depth. In off-years, we may look closer at Building Standard fees. Mr. Keeler stated he has been a customer of these services and he was pleased with the service and did not have any complaints about the cost. Vice Mayor Alutto stated that she was looking at the subject from the labor perspective. Mr. Keeler asked if service delivery has been an issue. Mr. Stiffler stated that he has not heard that is the case. Staffing is not currently a problem. When there is an opening, it is a challenge.

Mr. Stiffler stated that many fees are based on square footage. Square footage continuing to fall creates larger cost increases for staff. The City of Dublin does not want to overcharge.

Mr. Keeler stated Dublin is selling fewer services but has fixed costs so may need to charge more. Less available land and Dublin's land use ratio of 60/40 residential to commercial, would seem to indicate that the downward trend in developable square footage will continue. While the trend is interesting, the reality is the costs will be passed onto developers and developers are likely seeing this in other communities. Mr. Stiffler stated that there is still some planned density.

Mr. Urbancsik stated that the direct cost recovery in 2023 was approximately 95.5% and a similar percentage is projected in 2024.

#### *Recreation*

Staff is proposing 5% increases for the DCRC and outdoor pool passes. Additional discussion regarding population growth and capacity challenges, rate structure (resident/school district resident/non-resident), athletic fields and pool lane rentals will be held at the October 14<sup>th</sup> Council work session.

Based on anticipated expenditures the proposed increases are recommended to align with recreation cost recovery policy. Cost recovery has remained around 55% and the fees will need to be adjusted accordingly to meet the goals of the cost recovery program.

Mr. Keeler asked about veteran rates. Mr. Earman stated that there is a senior/veteran rate. Mr. Urbancsik stated that not every pass category was displayed in the presentation.

Vice Mayor Alutto asked how many non-resident passes are sold annually. Mr. Earman stated that 5% non-resident and 15% school district resident passes of approximately 8,000 are sold annually. Vice Mayor Alutto asked if there are still crowding issues. Mr. Earman stated nothing has changed since this was discussed previously. Some of this

will be addressed with recommended strategies to be discussed at the October 14 Council Work Session. Vice Mayor Alutto stated that when the Dublin Community Recreation Center was built, there was a desire for non-resident visitors. Dublin is a very different city now. She stated that her concern is for the residents of Dublin first. She would prefer non-residents shoulder a bigger portion of the cost burden than the residents.

Mr. Keeler stated that he is comfortable with these fees but there needs to be additional conversation. A 5% increase is not a huge amount.

Mr. Stiffler stated that staff wanted to bring forward recommendations resulting from the Cost Study. The recommendations that are more policy specific will be discussed on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Stiffler stated that the growth in other wages has been significant, and that is a large part of this facility's spending. Demand and wage increase continue as part of the recovery from 2020.

Mr. Earman stated that Dublin's record membership was set in the mid-2000s but we have exceeded 2019 numbers. Mr. Keeler asked if the City has hired more people. Mr. Earman stated that Recreation has maintained the same number of part-time hours since prior to the pandemic. Costs are rising because of the wages being paid to those employees. Mr. Stiffler stated that the hours have remained constant but bodies may have increased as some part-time employees work fewer hours, requiring additional employees. Mr. Keeler stated that it would seem that the Recreation Center is still the least expensive option for residents, so if a 7% increase one year is necessary to be fiscally responsible and sustainable, that is appropriate. Residents have other options and all those other options are raising their dues.

Mr. Reiner stated that incremental increases is preferable to a big jump in costs.

Mr. Stiffler stated the City did a big jump in 2018 and resolved not to do that again.

Vice Mayor Alutto stated that this feels appropriate but as we consider policy changes, she would like to be mindful of senior and veteran rates.

#### *Water and Sewer*

Mr. Urbancsik stated that consistent with discussions during the Capital Improvement Project (CIP), it was determined that a 1% increase to water usage fees and a 6% increase to sewer user fees would be recommended to support each fund's obligations in future years. The rate structures for both will continue to be reviewed as part of the annual CIP process. Based on the need to continually maintain the sanitary sewer lines and potential service expansions, future user fees and capacity charges will continue to be evaluated. Mr. Urbancsik shared cost comparisons with municipalities in central Ohio. Mr. Stiffler stated that discussion regarding project funding will be continued with the next CIP process.

Mr. Stiffler stated an ordinance will come forward to City Council at their first meeting in November and for passage at their second meeting in November. The updated fees would be effective January 1, 2025.

#### Health and Wellness Partner - Draft Request for Proposals (RFP)

Mr. Earman stated that a draft request for proposals was provided to the Committee as part of their packet materials. The proposal was based on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan's consideration of strategies to offset costs. At the March 4 Council work session, discussion was held regarding projected growth and capacity and funding sources. The RFP includes a variety of proposals including:

- DCRC Refresh
- Action Items for the Community Health Needs Assessment
- Potential Future Land Acquisitions
- Parks and Recreation Master Plan Potential Major Projects
- Evaluation of Feasibility Studies for Sports Complex and Performing Arts Center.

Staff has benchmarked Upper Arlington and Hilliard who have successfully drafted an RFP for their health and wellness centers. Staff is seeking feedback to understand whether the Committee is in favor of staff soliciting RFPs for potential funding partnerships, whether the Committee approves of the five potential projects and if the Committee is in favor of the scope and content of the proposed RFP.

Mr. Keeler stated that this is a very transparent method and he likes the process. The RFP is very broad and staff should expect an array of responses. Each respondent could choose the item they want to help with. He encouraged staff to keep an open mind. He hopes this garners many responses. He asked about future land use acquisitions. Mr. Earman stated that the advantage to the City of purchasing parcels is leverage to develop those properties in ways that best meet the needs of the City. If there is a health entity looking for a location, and they are willing to work with us to help buy that property, that would benefit both parties.

Mr. Reiner shared his support. He stated that there was previous discussion regarding naming right.

Mr. Earman stated that all five of these projects could be a package.

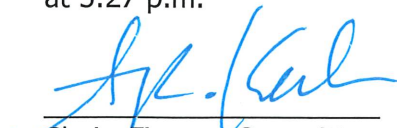
Vice Mayor Alutto expressed her support for the draft RFP.

Mr. Reiner stated that the question is how to get this information in front of the people who need to see it. Mr. Keeler suggested that when this RFP is sent, all renderings and plans for these projects should be included so interested parties have a marketing packet in front of them.

Mr. Earman stated the draft RFP has live links to each of those projects.

#### **AJDOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

  
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Chair, Finance Committee

  
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Deputy Clerk of Council