



**Ravenna City Council
Planning Committee Meeting Minutes
September 11, 2023**

The public meeting was held in person in City Council Chambers.

Council present: Council President Andrew Kluge, Rob Kairis, Paul Moskun, Cheryl Wood, Tim Calfee, Matt Harper, Christina West

Also attending the meeting: Mayor Frank Seman, Law Director, Frank Cimino; Police Chief, Jeff Wallis; Finance Director, Brian Huff; City Engineer, Bob Finney; Council Clerk, Chelsea Gregor; Cliff Soudil, Larry Silenius

Planning Committee Meeting was called to order at 6:04 P.M. by Chairperson, Rob Kairis

The first item was downtown signage.

Mr. Kairis addressed downtown signage and the funding of it.

Mr. Kluge stated that the downtown signage might be possible with ARPA funds. He explained that he brought forth a design to Council and was told there should be guidelines for the signage before it could be installed.

Mr. Finney explained that various organizations wanted downtown signage and that the previous thought was to pause the project to create a policy addressing it.

Mayor Seman stated that money was set aside from the Jack Schafer fund for the signage.

Mr. Harper stated that there were \$4,500 in funds set aside and that it can be looked into.

Mayor Seman stated that there was originally \$100,000 in funds donated.

Mr. Kairis stated that there were four final stage signage designs originally to choose from.

In response to a comment on signage approval, Mr. Finney stated that the City can place signs downtown as they see fit.

Mr. Soudil inquired about the new water tower and stated that he thought the remainder of the ARPA funds were being set aside for that project. It was stated that there was \$500,000 remaining in ARPA funds and that only \$4,500 would be utilized for the signage if the City were to utilize those funds.

Mr. Kairis suggested leaving the item in committee for future discussions.

Mr. Huff stated that there is \$60,000 left from the Shafer funds.

- The item was for discussion only.

The second item was Chapter 214.

Mr. Kairis explained that the current wording of Chapter 214 of the codified ordinances is vague and unclear regarding proper procedure of purchasing items and contracts.

Ms. Wood stated that there should be a checks and balance system for purchases and contracts.

Mr. Huff said that he had reached out to the City of Aurora to find out what their purchasing threshold was and how their procedure works. He stated that they have a \$20,000 purchase threshold which allows a department head to create a purchase order for the item or contract, but that anything over that limit must come before Council. Mr. Huff added that the City of Ravenna

has a three-signature process for purchase orders that helps to create a check and balance system that is already in place.

Mr. Finney cited an example from his department and questioned if an item such as traffic signals was approved and allocated, if that would need to come before Council. He added that purchases work differently than contracts.

Mr. Kairis stated to question that just because funds are allocated for an item, what is the level of oversight that Council would like to have.

The Law Director explained that according to the Charter the Mayor is authorized to sign contracts and stated that Chapter 214 solely deals with state bid purchasing where public bidding is not required. He stated that the bidding threshold has increased to \$75,000 where contracts outside of state purchasing require 3 bids for a project. Mr. Cimino stated that it is up to Council to decide what they are comfortable with allowing and cited examples such as a monthly report for purchases and contracts.

Mr. Kluge explained that the Clerk had shared emails from other municipalities and that they all have their own version of approving purchases and contracts.

Mr. Cimino reiterated that Council can set a policy that they feel comfortable with and that it can be changed over time with what works for Council.

Mr. Kairis asked Council what level of expenditure it felt comfortable with approving.

Mr. Kluge stated that he would rely on the Finance Directors suggestion of \$20,000 to \$25,000.

Mr. Huff cited examples of options for Council to consider.

Mr. Kairis asked about a bundled report each month.

Mr. Huff offered a check register where Council can view all the checks that have been written each month.

Mr. Cimino stated that the Finance Department gets a lot of requests each month regarding what needs to be taken to Council for approval and said that they can compile a list to give to Council to help develop a policy.

Mr. Kairis stated that they can email department heads to get a gage of their needs and questions.

- The item was for discussion only.

The third item was the Quadretec Care “Energize the Environment” Grant Program.

Mr. Kairis stated that the item is a grant in the sum of \$3,500 to help develop a trail for the newly purchased Emerald Lake Preservation.

- The item was moved forward.

The fourth item was a discussion on spending ARPA funds.

Mr. Kairis stated that American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds were given out to municipalities by the Federal Government due to the pandemic and that the City was given approximately \$1.3 million dollars. He explained that some of the funds have been allocated for the water tower project and that there is approximately \$500,000 remaining. Mr. Kairis stated that there have been concerns that the funds could be revoked if not used and recommended spending the funds which need to be encumbered by the end of 2024.

Mr. Kluge stated that he wanted to make sure that the money is allocated for the end of the year and then encumbered next year.

Mr. Huff stated that the usage of the funds used to be specified and that the funds can be used for

anything now.

Mr. Calfee stated that he believes that one of the permissible uses is to rebuild reserves to enhance financial stability and suggested that the funds could go to the General Fund.

Mr. Huff agreed and suggested that it could also be split amongst different funds.

Ms. Wood stated that she would like to see a portion of the funds be set aside for the future build of the new municipal buildings.

Mr. Kairis suggested that some of the funds could go towards helping the homeless or the new water tower project.

Mr. Kluge asked Mr. Finney for an update on the allocated funds for the water tower and stated to clarify that ARPA funds can be reallocated if necessary.

Mr. Huff stated that the remainder of the ARPA funds is \$576,000.

Mr. Kairis stated that the goal is to move the ARPA funds out of the line to allocate them and to talk about ways to spend them next month.

- The item was for discussion only.

The fifth item was a donation to Ravenna City Schools.

Mr. Kluge stated that he had spoken with the Mayor and Finance Director about the topic. He explained that the proposed donation would be for an electronic dismissal system in the sum of \$1,800 that is used as a communication device to check in car and bus riders for kids. Mr. Kluge stated that West Main Elementary School currently does fundraising for the system and that the donation would provide the school with a year of service. He said that the principal of the school has stated that the system works well and that they are looking to expand the program across elementary schools.

Ms. West stated that it would be nice and that it works smoothly.

Mr. Calfee stated that his comment on the proposal is that the Ravenna School District has a \$30 million-dollar budget per year. He stated that there are many systems that can work in that way and was concerned about the City providing the service, adding that if there is a real need then the school district should cover the expense.

Ms. Wood suggested that Ravenna Township help with the cost of it.

Mr. Calfee stated that the request might be outside of the City's scope.

Mr. Kairis stated that the City does help fund the School Resource Officer (SRO).

Ms. Woods stated that the SRO is a good program, and that the township should contribute to the cost since township students attend Ravenna High School.

- The item was for discussion only.

Management Update

There being no further business for discussion, the meeting adjourned at 6:56 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

**Rob Kairis, Chairperson
Planning Committee**