

BEACHWOOD CITY COUNCIL MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND INSURANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT BEACHWOOD CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 25325 FAIRMOUNT BOULEVARD, ON TUESDAY, AUGUST 23, 2016 AT 6:30 P.M.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30P.M. by Barbara Janovitz and Seconded by Brian Linick.

ROLL CALL: Present: A. Isaacson, B.B. Janovitz, B.Linick
 Absent: J. Pasch
 Also Present: H.L. Jones, M. Kaplan, T. Turick

1. Discussion regarding Ohiocheckbook.com

Mr. Frank Kohstall and Ms. Jessica Draymar opened the meeting with a demonstration of the current Ohiocheckbook.com site.

After the demonstration the Committee was allowed to ask questions regarding the ohiocheckbook.com site.

Mr. Isaacson asked if there were problems or issues with using this system as a tool for the City.

Mr. Jacobs stated that he had no problems with the system, generally speaking.

Mr. Isaacson asked what the end result of using the Ohiocheckbook.com platform would be.

Mr. Linick stated that he believed that it is a tool available for transparency of the City.

Mr. Kohstall explained that there is a public distrust with Government and technology can help fix that particular issue.

Mr. Kohstall stated that sixty five percent (65%) of people polled stated they have gone online to view Government financial documents and ninety five percent (95%) responded that local governments do not communicate effectively.

Mr. Kohstall stated that transparency is subjective and the Ohiocheckbook.com would bring what Beachwood already does to a higher level.

Mr. Kohstall stated that the Ohiocheckbook.com can display data how the City would like to and that the City could go as far back as four (4) years. The City can decide how to set up the columns and can decide the order in which information will appear. Payroll can be aggregated by department and the implementation would only take a matter of single digit hours.

Mr. Linick asked if there were analytics available to track the traffic through the Ohiocheckbook.com website.

Mr. Kohstall answered that 7, 30, and 90 day analytics would be available to track new vs. returning users, geo location, saved views, and time spent on the site.

Mrs. Janovitz asked why other cities have not opted into using the website.

Mr. Kohstall stated that a few of the reasons included not having the time early on for implementation, fear that citizens won't know how to use the system, and trying to find the right time.

Mr. Jacobs stated that he wanted to do what was best for the City and that the City of Beachwood has more transparency than most.

Mr. Jacobs stated that the Governor's office does not like Ohiocheckbook.com and that the former Finance Director had told him that no one around the City of Beachwood area is on the checkbook.

Mr. Jacobs stated that he reached out to his State Senator and was told that this system was not necessary if the City is already online and doing their job.

Mr. Jacobs stated that he also spoke with two (2) members of the School Board and they stated that the School Board has been approached to also utilize Ohiocheckbook.com. There was a concern voiced over the fact that at some point Ohiocheckbook.com would cost the school system money.

Mr. Jacobs stated that previously in July South Euclid was contemplating on committing to Ohiocheckbook.com. Mr. Jacobs stated that he went back to South Euclid before the current meeting and South Euclid had decided not to commit.

Mr. Kohstall stated that the site can help alleviate public records request and the startup cost can be offset with the creation of efficiency and savings.

Mr. Linick stated that the cost for an individual municipality to build a site like Ohiocheckbook.com would be ten times more expensive.

Mr. Horwitz stated that transparency is a buzz word and that only about six (6) people look at the current system on the City of Beachwood website and that amount might double around election time.

Mr. Horwitz stated that Council supported the former Finance Director when it was decided to put the checks online at the City of Beachwood website in a searchable PDF format.

Mr. Horwitz stated that the former Finance Director stated there was no harm or benefit in using the Ohiocheckbook.com program and that this is a simple decision. The program is free and it would save time.

Mr. Linick asked if some of the concern from other organizations has been what will happen next with the Treasurer's office.

Mr. Kohstall stated that yes that has in fact held some places up from committing.

Mr. Horwitz asked for a consensus from the Council about the use and implementation of Ohiocheckbook.com.

Mr. Linick asked if at some point in the future the City would be able to back out of the use of this program.

Mr. Kohstall answered affirmatively.

Ms. Janovitz stated that this should not be a political decision if there was an opt-out option and she agreed with Mr. Horwitz that if there was no cost then low use of the website is not a valid reason to not utilize the system.

Mr. Jacobs stated that he would like to see analytics from Ohiocheckbook.com

Ms. Kaplan stated that the system looks nice but doesn't think that Ohiocheckbook.com will actually get much use.

Mr. Jacobs asked if there was anything Ohiocheckbook.com could offer that the City of Beachwood doesn't already have.

Mr. Isaacson stated that the City of Beachwood website had neither searching nor graphing capabilities which Ohiocheckbook.com does have.

Mr. Linick asked if there was a downside or a risk.

Mr. Kohstall stated that a year later with 400 online and 350 committed he felt there was really no downside.

Mr. Jacobs stated that he needed more information before supporting Ohiocheckbook.com.

Mr. Linick stated that Ohiocheckbook.com was far better than what the City could provide.

Mr. Horwitz stated that the implementation of Ohiocheckbook.com would change nothing in the current operation of displaying the City's expenses and the he is aware that there are political overtones and that if the next treasurer were to charge for the use of the system then Council would back out with no obligation. Mr. Horwitz did point out that one of the downsides may be that the system doesn't help get all of the information out and that the system may cause more Public Records Requests.

Mr. Isaacson stated that his feelings were that this is easy to use and is easy to implement with low effort and that he does still have some concern. He would like to amend the Ordinance to allow the City to stop and reevaluate if there came a time when a fee would be charged for the utilization of the program.

Closing comments included that Ms. Janovitz does not like to use future cost as an excuse not to realize this project. Mr. Linick stated that this is open-ended and that the City can leave at any time. Mr. Isaacson stated that all were concerned about future cost. Mr. Linick stated that things could change in cycles of two (2) and four (4) years.

Mr. Kohstall thanked the Committee again for allowing him to come and speak about this opportunity.

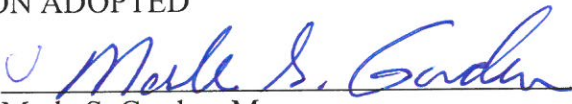
Mr. Isaacson asked for a Motion to be made for Adjournment.

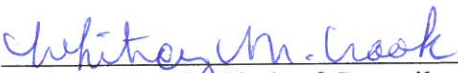
ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Barbara Janovitz seconded by Brian Linick at 8:03 P.M. to adjourn the Finance and Insurance Committee Meeting to the next regularly scheduled Council meeting.

ROLL CALL	Yes:	A. Isaacson, B.B. Janovitz, B.Linick
	Abstain:	None.
	No:	None.
	Not Voting:	None.
MOTION ADOPTED		

Approved:


Merle S. Gorden, Mayor


Whitney Crook, Clerk of Council