The Finance Committee for the Village of Monroeville met on Tuesday, February 15th, 2022 at 6:00 PM in the Council Chambers for the purpose of reviewing proposals for the downtown sidewalk program.

Present were: Chris Raftery, Joe Galea, Bob Whitacre, Sam Wiley, Mayor Fries-Seip, Bonnie Beck, Tom Gray, Heather Alicea and Chief Lyons.

Chris Raftery opened the meeting and asked Tom to advise in regards to Poggemeyer Design Group’s (PDG) presentation of the downtown street-scape phase. Tom created a two-page plan that shows the nuts and bolts of PDG’s proposal. Tom also had a companion proposal that deals with the possibility of taking the green space between the old Leis building and the Main Street Maintenance LLC building and the apartment building and turning it into parking space. Chris asked for clarification on the location and Bonnie advised the green space area is the former Commercial House property. Tom advised the proposal came in today, 2/15/22. It’s a two-page proposal that details the cost associated with trying to develop the same piece of property. Tom advised the sidewalks on the right-hand side of the street from downtown to the corner have been in disrepair for a long time. The Village has put band-aids on the sidewalk issues over the years, but aggressive attempts haven’t been made in regards to interim repair in order to create a safer environment or a proposal to wholesale replace them in a manner that’s consistent with today’s construction standards and ADA requirements. During the course of the construction of the Municipal Complex, Council and Village Administration discussed that the sidewalk repair would be a keystone to downtown revitalization. Follow-up was to occur at some point with the sidewalks on both sides of the street being improved, including curb work and making the appearance more aesthetically appealing, and for the downtown merchants. Council is aware that the sidewalk project is a General Fund project without some type of grant source. There is an electrical component to underground the existing overhead street light wires to install spare conduit for potential holiday light installations, trees, flower pots, etc. Some of the distributed cost would occur within the electrical division. When reconstruction for Route 20 was occurring, ODOT was working on the sidewalks on both sides of the street including the four corners. When working on the space in front of the Monroeville Railroad Group building, a panel of concrete was pulled up and a coal chute was discovered. Neither ODOT nor the Village was anticipating the coal chute and there were no drawings that showed the coal chute. During that same excavation, the building wall in the basement collapsed. ODOT was able to rebuild the basement wall, firm it up and fill the area where the coal chute was and in turn, ordered new concrete to complete that intersection. You can see the extension of the concrete when walking in front of that building. This goes to show there are hidden issues within that location. While working on that, it was found the chute extends another twenty to thirty feet further to the east. Tom said he is pointing this out because it’s not just about replacing concrete, this is about a major undertaking with hidden challenges. The Village has no existing prints for the downtown infrastructure. The other challenge with that side of the street is having one waterline that comes across between all those buildings. That waterline previously had a manifold placed to distribute water between all the buildings. There is only one sanitary sewer line that comes across the street and it has clay tile. If a business would need a fire line, if someone would need to make changes to support an additional restroom or if the buildings are remodeled and used for other purposes, those improvements cause the dynamics to change with the utilities. The burden of putting in additional water and sewer lines to support the new businesses could be exorbitant. There would be a burden placed on the property owners for their portion of the sidewalk in front of the buildings that they own. Above ground work doesn’t take into consideration something that may happen below ground. The cost sharing dynamics are undetermined. The project is in excess of $100,000.00, not counting engineering. The project could be accomplished with grant funding. The application period will open shortly for the Community Development Block grants administered through the Huron County Commissioners through the State. Income levels are reviewed for that grant and the income level for Monroeville is high, which makes it difficult to qualify. Attempts have been made before and will be attempted again for this project, as it’s worth the effort to go forward. That grant could also fund a second application for the possibility of the green space utilization. The engineering and design cost for the downtown street-scape come out to $14,000.00. The Village could go forward with preliminary engineering and design only with no bidding or construction, as an estimate for construction is needed for the grant application. There is some money in the Sidewalk Capital Project Fund and the Downtown Revitalization Fund that could be used for the engineering. It lends itself to submission of the grant and for other opportunities grant-wise. It shows good faith on Council’s behalf that downtown merchants aren’t being ignored nor is the desire for improvement. If that is the route that is chosen, it will take some time to see if the Village is approved for the grant. Village employees can make a dedicated effort to interim repairs such as fixing the loose concrete, removing the ragged stone and putting in wood planking to make it look deck-like on the edge of the curb. Work could also be done across the street, from Old Soul Woodworking down to the corner, using the pavement saw to cut out the failed sections of sidewalk up against the curb and against the roadside, squaring them out and cleaning up what looks bad. The Mayor asked Tom if he knew of any specifics for the Safe Routes to School Grant through ODOT. Tom advised it’s 1.8 miles from school. The Mayor asked if the Village would qualify. Tom advised you have to take the end points into consideration as well as how many students walk that path to the school. Tom has reached out to the mental health division in Huron County as well as the Huron County Public Health Department about grants. Eric Cherry from the Health Department is helping Tom look into this. Going back to the discussion, it would be a good step to look at the engineering and design and then seek grant funding. Bob Whitacre asked if the $14,000.00 would cover everything that is being discussed. Tom advised him to refer back to the plan that he provided Council which shows the costs. One side of the street is more challenging in regards to meeting ADA compliance with the elevation factor. The Mayor asked if the businesses have to shoulder any of the responsibility with this project. Bonnie advised the businesses are responsible for four feet of sidewalk and the rest would be the Village’s responsibility. Tom verified the same, but until we get into this project, we wouldn’t know what contingencies would have to be made to make this work. Tom said he thinks the design and engineering in 2022 is a good step forward, shows good faith and it will dictate how we move forward. The Mayor asked when the Village employees could begin making improvements. Tom said when the weather breaks, the improvements can begin. Chris asked Bonnie if the Permissive Tax Fund can be tapped into. Bonnie advised no. Sam asked if there is any outside money available from Shade Tree or Tree City. Tom advised Shade Tree and Tree City may be willing to donate a tree but there are no funds available. Bob asked where ODOT’s responsibility stops. Tom advised where the ragged edge is at the curb. The Village was able to negotiate with ODOT to work all four corners and make the corners ADA complaint, and ODOT absorbed the cost. The flipside was the Village replacing the Route 20 waterline. Joe asked if any grants are available for ADA purposes. Tom advised there are a number of funding opportunities available however there are always bottom-line qualifications. The Village needs a relatively good estimate of the total cost of this project in order to qualify for grants. Bob asked if there is a source available that shows Village’s what grants are available and how to apply for them. Tom advised we do the best job we can and services can be hired for this. The Ferguson Group and OML are the best services available to the Village for this process. Bob asked if senators can get involved. Tom has reached out to different offices and is usually provided with the same link in regards to seeking grant information. Tom provided the second proposal in regards to the green space. The engineering cost is $37,500 and the design portion of that is $19,100.00. Tom advised he isn’t sure where Council wants go with this, as there aren’t enough funds to cover both proposals in regards to doing the engineering and design only. Neil from PDG advised if the green space is converted to parking, there might be 12-15 spaces that could go in and a certain number of spaces have to be handicapped. The slope at that location could be a challenge as well. The Mayor advised growing interest downtown needs to be supported for customers and for parking, while being financially responsible. Joe agreed with that. Bonnie advised that on the financial end, there is $37,831 in the Downtown Revitalization Fund and $19,100.00 in the Sidewalk Fund. The funds are there for the preliminary engineering but a grant is needed to make this happen, as the General Fund cannot support another loan or the construction itself at this point in time. Bob asked if there is a ballpark figure on what this project might cost. Tom advised $100,000.00 is the number he has and it may wind up being more because of the unknowns. Bonnie advised the businesses would legally have the right to ask the Village to pay for the sidewalk and then she could assess their properties over a period of years using the formula from the Ohio Revised Code. If that is the case, the Village would be taking on the cost of that as well, initially. Tom advised if the design and engineering can be done on both projects, that gets the Village headed in the right direction, with also taking the interim improvements into effect. The Mayor advised it’s irresponsible to do nothing, so moving forward gets the Village a clearer picture of what needs to be done. Tom agreed that it allows the Village to continue to work towards the goal of downtown revitalization, with using sound financial and business practices. Bob agreed, as it is the Village’s responsibility for the upkeep. Sam asked if Council needs to vote on this. Bonnie advised that in regards to the Finance Committee, Chris can make the recommendation at the next Council meeting for whatever direction that Council wants to go and then Council would vote on that. Chris asked if legislation can be prepared for the next Council meeting and Bonnie confirmed. Joe said if the plans are put in place and if grants are pursued, it would give the Village credibility to see if any of the businesses are willing to contribute or grant match. Other locations have done the same to obtain funding. Tom advised we will put forth every effort necessary to move forward. Discussion in regards to foundations, grants and community funds that could possibly assist. Tom excused himself at the conclusion of his presentation.

Chris spoke in regards to Chief Lyons contract with the Village and advised Chief Lyons that he is welcome to stay and listen. Chief Lyons chose to stay. Sam asked if Chief Lyons budget is going to be discussed as well. Chief Lyons advised he can answer any questions that Council has in regards to his proposal and he believes Council is still in the preliminary stages of discussion in regards to the budget. Chris verified that. Bonnie asked if Council has a copy of Chief Lyons contract as she wasn’t aware that the contract was going to be discussed tonight. Joe advised he doesn’t have it. Chris advised Joe that Chief Lyons had initially sent that out in November or December, which is why Joe doesn’t have a copy of it. Joe advised that is fine. Chris stated as Chief is aware, everyone received a pay increase with the exception of Chief Lyons. It felt right to discuss this with Chief Lyons. Chris asked Chief Lyons if he is satisfied that he didn’t receive an increase and/or if he would like to discuss this. Council would like to discuss what can be done to sweeten the pot a little bit without changing the term, which is dated June of 2021. That being said, the equivalent of the three dollars. Chris asked Bonnie if it is premature to do the nuts and bolts of what those dollars would be. Bonnie asked Chris if her recommendation would be for the three dollars an hour increase like everyone else. Chris advised it’s to be discussed. Bonnie advised she didn’t think it would be that big of an impact for one person. The Mayor verified Chief Lyona was the only one who didn’t receive an increase and Bonnie verified this, as Chief Lyons is the only one under a contract. Bob asked how many hours a year Chief Lyons works under the contract. Chief Lyons advised it’s the same as everyone else and Bonnie advised it’s 2080 hours, full-time. Chris asked Bonnie if the increase being discussed for Chief Lyons is palatable for the budget. Bonnie advised she doesn’t see why it wouldn’t be as it’s one person. Bonnie asked Chris if the increase would be retro-active. Chris advised the increase probably needs to be retro-active to 1/1/22. Chris asked Chief Lyons if he would be in agreement with receiving additional vacation time instead of a dollar figure. Chief Lyons advised he is open to that but it’s a struggle to obtain coverage in order to take vacation time. Having said that, Chief Lyons would love to have the raise, but his focus is on his full-time officers and his part-time officers. Chief Lyons is okay with what he has as he is double dipping; he has a pension from Sandusky plus the wage he is making here with the Village. Other than that, he is very happy with where he is. Bob advised that’s commendable. Chief Lyons is very grateful to be considered, but he would rather Council address his troops and take care of them. Chris said going back to Chief Lyons proposal, she is still reviewing it and would like to see it addressed as a whole package. Chris asked Chief to verify that he is willing to forgo an increase for himself and factor that into a new base rate for his officers or incentives. Chief Lyons advised that base rate is what he would like to see reviewed. He would like to see an increase of .40 cents an hour for the afternoon shift differential. He would like to see the part-time rate increased to $16.00 an hour once probation is up. He has heard from his full-time officers and they would like the shift premium to go up .40 cents an hour and since they have a tough time taking their earned time, they want the cap to come off of the earned time. The officers would also like to see pay increases for their associate and bachelor degrees as well as removal of the longevity cap and an increase for the court call-in’s. Chief Lyons is grateful to Council for considering all of this. Chris asked Bonnie for her thoughts. Bonnie advised she has been working on the State Report and the budget hasn’t been started yet. Bonnie said there are two different issues here and some of those are addressed in the handbook as opposed to the wage ordinance. When the three dollar an hour pay increase was discussed, it was talked about going into this year with the wage ordinance and working on bringing that up to par, so that would all be factored into the whole thing. Whatever is decided, whatever changes are made, it has to be across the board for all the employees. Chris agreed wholeheartedly.

The next meeting is on 2/24/22 in regards to the RFQ proposals. Bob advised he works with Mike Myers at Myers-Ziemke. He isn’t sure if wires were crossed or what happened, but Mike has no recent memory of being asked to quote insurance to the Village. Bob said that Mike wanted to clear the air to make sure Council was aware that he wasn’t asked. Chris advised she had a prior conversation with Mike and perhaps there was confusion in regards to the two different insurances that the Village has. Perhaps Mike wanted to quote the employee insurance rather than the casualty liability insurance. Discussion in regards to what is insured, improvements that have been made that change the insurance plan, what is presented at the RFQ proposals, etc. The Mayor advised Tom is very concerned with the storage issues and possibly erecting something to help with that, so there may be some potential changes. Discussion in regards to the status of invoice collection with the recent utility pole accidents.

Discussion in regards to acknowledgment/recognition of Pean’s Pizza and the 35 years they have been in business. It was decided that Bob would invite Jeff Pean to the March Council meeting in order for the Mayor to present Jeff with a proclamation and the Mayor will send a card of appreciation.

There being no other finance business to come before them, the meeting was adjourned at 7:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Alicea, MMC

Administrative Specialist