



CITY OF LITHONIA
MINUTES–SPECIAL CALLED VIRTUAL MEETING
COPS Grant Award
Thursday, January 27, 2022 @ 5:00 PM

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

The Special Called Meeting was called to order at 5:04 pm by Mayor Shameka S. Reynolds. A roll call was taken, and the following City Council Members were present: Darold Honore, Diane Howard, Amelia Inman, and Yolanda Sheppard. City Accountant Keesha McGurn was on the call. Vanerriah Wynn was absent.

II. Approval of Agenda

Councilwoman Howard motioned to approve the agenda, the motion was seconded by Councilwoman Sheppard and approved by a vote of 3-0.

III. Discussion

a. COPS Grant Award

Mayor Reynolds stated the purpose of the meeting, council needed more information to make a decision and wanted the accountant on the line to see what the future looks like if the grant is approved or denied, and the extension deadline is nearing. City Accountant Keesha McGurn stated the federal funds to be received totals in rounded figures 827k over a 3-year period and the city will fund \$278k. Information was received from Chief Pollard regarding how the funds will be sent and City Administrator Sands provided information on how the city will repay in unequal installments, the first year using 70k from the American Rescue Act funds, 35k from this year's funding and 35k from the second piece that will come in April/May/June or July. Second year replace funding through fines. The way the numbers are projecting the first year is fine, for the other 2 years strictly relying upon fines. Looks good on paper, what happens if the police officers do not produce. No concerns about the reporting requirements. Happy to take more detailed questions.

Council Questions:

Councilwoman Howard asked if the city is expected to retain these officers on payroll after the 3-year period. City Accountant: yes, the expectation is that the officers are kept on for at least 1 additional year, another clause the government will consider getting out of the grant, repayment during the first year \$93k, \$114k the second year. Councilwoman Howard confirmed through Administrator Sands there are currently 7 officers, if the grant is approved there would be 15 officers for 2,662 residents. Councilwoman Howard asked the city accountant if the city has funding for cars, Administrator Sands and Chief Pollard confirmed there are 9 cars assigned to the police department; 5 cars are take-home for officers, 2 take-home cars for Chief and Major. Asked if money is in the budget to purchase more vehicles. City Accountant said that 4 officers would be hired during the first year, purchasing 1 new vehicle out of splost, police officers will no longer take-home cars. Will the contribution be the same when hiring 4 officers? Response: you are only obligated to match what you draw down, flexibility to spend how you see fit, you can fund up to 8. First time learning of this. Chief Pollard looking to hire 6 officers initially.

Councilman Honore asked for clarity on the City Accountant's standpoint vs Chief of Police, fines generated \$5k month over a 2-year period. City Accountant stated that

finances/forfeitures for past 2 years (\$82,000 for 2021, \$66,000 2020, \$112,000 2019). Councilman Honoré's opinion is the police department can currently take care of itself as is, more emphasis is needed on management. Asking for an actual copy of the application to make a sound vote.

Mayor Reynolds asked Major Dejarnette to speak on productivity. As of September 2021, fully staffed, productivity has doubled and tripled over the past couple of months and weeks. Enforcements and citations are tracked, currently as of September 2021, 7-10 citations per 2 hours per day with one officer.

Councilwoman Inman summarized the number of officers in the department, and the interpretation of the hiring of 8 additional officers. City Accountant response: the hiring of 8 officers would be staggered with the interpretation that if all 8 are not hired, all funding would not be spent. Councilwoman Inman asked, legally has the attorney reviewed the documents? City Administrator response: no, that information is not available until the grant has been accepted in the portal, each individual page would have to be printed from the portal.

Councilwoman Sheppard is asking for respectable council decorum and protocol, asked accountant if there are any loans or grants that are past due, and if the city is in good standing, the citizens need more police officers in the city, witnessed an accident that was only maintained by one officer on a 12-hour shift, who was also directing traffic. If the city is meeting other obligations, let's put our heads together to manage this loan to ensure more officers are hired to make the city safe.

City Administrator Sands confirmed the new deadline for the extension is February 9th. Councilman Honoré asked for the application in its entirety to make a sound decision in voting, City Administrator Sands indicated once the city accepts the grant a copy would be made available and can be provided to the attorney for review at that time. Councilwoman Howard stated during the first year the money should be in an account outside of the budget, coupled without having a copy of the contract in-hand, leery about the grant, does not want to hold the community responsible for the grant, and keeping the new officers on payroll for an additional year once the grant ends. Would like to see the report on how many reserve officers are patrolling and what their hours look like, suggesting to hire 1-2 officers within the existing budget affordably.

Councilwoman Inman asked the City Accountant in forecasting if she foresees securing another TAN, response: does not anticipate a TAN in the latter part of the year, can be funded through American Rescue Act with another funding in the summer, year 2 another TAN would have to be secured, also bearing in mind the mortgage was deferred, the interest payment is due in June (\$7,500) and again in December (\$6,500), the principle and interest for 2023 will be \$27k due in June and \$27k due in December.

Mayor Reynolds asked for a motion to approve or deny the COPS Grant.

Councilman Honoré motioned to deny the COPS Grant for this time, the motion was seconded by Councilwoman Howard and approved by a vote of 2-0. Councilwoman Inman abstained needing more time to process the numbers. Councilwoman Sheppard was opposed.

Mayor Reynolds wants to check with the attorney for clarification on the motion.

Attorney Alicia Thompson entered the call and concluded 3 votes are needed to move an action forward in adoption according to the city charter.

IV. Executive Session (NONE)

V. Adjournment

Councilwoman Howard motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 pm, the motion was seconded by Councilwoman Inman and approved by a vote of 4-0.