

**CITY OF WIXOM  
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL  
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, JUNE 14, 2022**

Mayor Beagle called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Present:**

**Mayor:** P. Beagle  
**Deputy Mayor:** T. Rzeznik  
**Councilmembers:** P. Behrmann  
K. Gottschall  
T. Gronlund-Fox  
P. Sharpe  
R. Smiley

**AGENDA CHANGES:**

Mr. Brown added New Business #8 – Recommendation to Authorize a Resolution to Adopt a Revised Policy Relative to the Review and Granting of Financial (Poverty) Hardship Exemptions by the City of Wixom Board of Review

**MINUTES:**

**CM-06-73-22:** Moved and seconded by Councilmembers Smiley and Gronlund-Fox to approve the Regular City Council meeting minutes of May 24, 2022.

**Vote:**

**Motion Carried**

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

**1.) Letter of Resignation from the Cemetery Board from Kay Ash**

Mayor Beagle thanked Kay Ash for her service to the City. She'd been on the Cemetery Board for 18 years and they wished her the best.

**CALL TO THE PUBLIC:**

There were no comments at this time.

**CITY MANAGER REPORTS:**

**1.) Fire Monthly Reports – April 2022**

Councilmember Gottschall asked what percentage of total calls were not being adequately staffed. Interim Chief Geistler figured 10% of monthly calls were being staffed by one person. Councilmember Gottschall asked what would be a standard staffing expectation. Interim Chief Geistler said in order to be suitable to transport advanced life support medical calls, they needed a minimum of two personnel. Councilmember Gottschall heard about a multi-vehicle accident that only one firefighter responded to. Interim Chief Geistler confirmed they had a five-car accident at Maple and Wixom Road with only one person responding. Councilmember Gottschall asked how frequently were they concerned that they wouldn't have an adequate number of people responding to an emergency. Interim Chief Geistler replied every single day. Councilmember Gottschall asked what he thought it would take to address/adjust the staffing issue within the Department. Interim

Chief Geistler said the first thing they'd have to do was find a way to staff the station every day with a minimum of two people. He said that it could be done with the current staffing schedule but it would highly exceed overtime hours. Councilmember Gottschall asked if morale would improve if the schedule was worked out. Interim Chief Geistler said that it would. Councilmember Gottschall asked if morale was playing a factor in getting people to respond. Interim Chief Geistler said he did not believe morale was a factor in response, but it was more of the personnel trying to find a work/life balance. They had a total of nine personnel and that included a new hire with zero training and who just started EMT classes. Councilmember Gottschall thanked Interim Chief Geistler for his dedication to the City and stepping up over these last few months.

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox asked out of the eight fully-trained personnel, how many were full and part time. Interim Chief Geistler said they had four full-time and four part-time.

## **2.) Police Monthly Report – April 2022**

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox noticed the larcenies increased. She inquired if notification was given to residents to make them more aware; and if not, would giving notice be beneficial. Director Moore said they didn't notify anyone because a majority of the larcenies were catalytic converters. Most of the theft took place in parking lots, businesses and apartment complexes. Director Moore said that a reminder notification and sharing safety advice would be helpful.

Councilmember Sharpe asked what sorts of topics fell under non-criminal complaints and other service requests and why the increase. Director Moore said that encompassed warrant arrests, assists to the Fire Department, assists to other law enforcement agencies or government agencies, extra patrols, burglary alarms, fire alarms and animal complaints. He wasn't sure why the numbers increased but could speculate that as they get more out of the pandemic, those types of calls increase.

### **CONSENT AGENDA:**

**CM-06-74-22:** Motion and seconded made by Councilmembers Behrmann and Gronlund-Fox to approve the Consent Agenda as presented which included:

- 1.) Approval to receive and file:
  - a.) Cemetery Board Minutes – June 2, 2021
  - b.) Planning Commission Minutes – May 2, 2022
  - c.) Planning Commission Minutes – May 23, 2022

**Vote:**

**Motion Carried**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** (None)

**DISCUSSION:****1.) Road Millage**

Councilmember Gottschall asked they touch base on discussions held a year ago with HRC and Mr. Sikma regarding the roadway's PASER ratings and infrastructure investments. He recalled some shared fear that they were not adequately funding the local road program.

Mr. Sikma said the data available was from last year because they hadn't completed the new PASER ratings yet; however, they haven't done any road projects that would have improved the numbers from last year. Mr. Sikma noted the current road millage was set to expire in 2026, but they hoped to act before then in order to continue the road program. He stated that they needed to determine how much funding would be enough and hoped the information given to them would assist them in making that decision. He reminded them that the goal was to maintain or increase the overall PASER ratings for the next several years. He explained that each road was rated on a system from 10-1. The scale displayed the types of road maintenance involved. A PASER rating of 8-10 would require routine maintenance (crack seal and minor patching), a PASER rating of 5-7 rating required preventive maintenance (patchwork, crack sealing, surface treatments, sealing, joint repairs and overlay) and a PASER rating of 1-4 required a complete repair.

Mayor Beagle inquired about surface overlay. Mr. Sikma said a surface overlay meant the removal of 2" of asphalt then add new asphalt. Mayor Beagle asked if any Wixom roads needed to be torn out and relayed with a new base and surface. Mr. Sikma said there were several. He explained that you could tell if the base was gone when you saw web-cracking on the surface. He indicated that only the web-cracking section may need repair because the base may still be okay in another section.

Mayor Beagle commented that engineering started on West Maple in the Fall of 2022 with a new surface in the Spring of 2023.

Councilmember Behrmann noted the information given showed that Maple Run needed total reconstruction; however, they were only planning on performing an overlay. He questioned if an overlay would last when the PASER rating was poor.

Mr. Brown said that it would be a judgement call indicated by the base. He explained that the surface may appear to look bad but the base could still be strong enough for an overlay.

Councilmember Behrmann understood they would install a higher slope for run-off.

Mayor Beagle asked how many years would you get from only milling. Mr. Sikma said a typical asphalt road was good for twenty years, and an overlay had a 15-20-year lifespan. He explained that once they lay the asphalt or concrete road, the PASER rating would become an 8-10. He said it's their goal to keep up the preventative maintenance in order to keep the PASER rating from going lower than a 5.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik asked if they were getting closer to knowing a dollar amount required to keep the City's roads within the 6-10 PASER rating category. Mr. Sikma said once the new PASER rating results were available, he would have a clearer picture. Deputy Mayor Rzeznik asked how much did a PASER rating study cost. Mr. Sikma indicated that the study was performed by trained staff. Deputy Mayor Rzeznik knew of many technologies being developed based on dash cameras and sensor data that could perform continuous real time PASER studies. He suggested they keep an eye out for that sort of technology over the next five years because it could be worth deploying.

Councilmember Smiley trusted that Mr. Sikma had a system and knew how to prioritize what road needed certain maintenance. He questioned their method of concentrating on the roads that fell in the middle category. He figured if they spent all the money on the roads that fell within the 5-7 PASER rating, they wouldn't be able to fund the roads that needed to be completely replaced. Also, he asked if they were concerned that the resources and manpower wouldn't be available to perform the road maintenance. Mr. Sikma was concerned because they were limited by financial circumstances and the engineers performing the reviews.

Mr. Brown said the firms within the State capable of doing the road projects were not sufficient to fix every road throughout the State, and they were being stressed further by the additional monies available for infrastructure. He figured that more and more dollars were still chasing that insufficient pool of contractors so costs would increase; not withstanding what was going on with larger macroeconomic sense where inflation would cause it to increase further still. He asked that they keep in mind the level of investment would have a decreasing impact because of the increasing costs. He explained that when costs went up, less roads were repaired and the PASER ratings were corresponding less positively impacted. He expressed how difficult it was to get roads repaired because of the many factors involved.

Mr. Sikma said the majority of the State of Michigan's roads were in the same situation as our roadways. Mr. Brown said that Wixom did okay with the roads that fell within the middle categories, but poorly with the roads that fell in the higher and lower ends of the scale. Mr. Sikma noted the anticipated road projects were the Maple Run II Subdivision, Courts of Highgate Subdivision, Cliffs on Loon Lake Subdivision and West Maple Road. He explained the current road millage was 1.1439 mills which expired in 2026, and they could only increase the millage by 5% or CPI, whichever was lower.

Mr. Brown said with Proposal A capping the increase they didn't receive the benefits of a large inflationary surge. He explained that even with higher property values, you didn't receive the full benefit because of the cap. Ultimately, Proposal A created a losing proposition for municipalities that relied on those valuations to help them maintain the costs they were experiencing that were growing beyond those inflationary figures. The current millage was a 20-year millage and the millage rate was lower than what it used to be because the Headlee Amendment.

Councilmember Smiley assumed if they needed additional funding for roads, they had to create their own millage. Mr. Brown agreed because they would never catch up with the problem based on only receiving the funding for any other sources.

Councilmember Behrmann wondered if they knew what the millage needed to be for the new potential road millage. He asked if it was possible to survey the residents asking them their feelings on the following: a potential special assessment when the local road millage expired, the possibility of extending the current millage where they were not making headway but fixing what they could, or pay more money to get the roads up to par. He would like to see some data of what the residents wanted before any decisions were made.

Mr. Brown said to project the amount of money needed for road repairs would require a pretty heavy investment of time and money with consultants. Before going that far, they wanted to get Council's reaction to a potential millage. They could put together a survey but cautioned that the special assessment could be a pretty high dollar amount over a 10-20-year period.

Councilmember Gottschall thought they could adequately explain to residents the difference between a millage and special assessment. He wouldn't recommend a special assessment because it usually depended on road frontage and a potential lien on the property.

Councilmember Behrmann wasn't sure he'd recommend a special assessment either, but he did want to obtain feedback from the residents.

Mr. Sikma said special assessments could require legal and banking fees, bonding and potential interest.

Mr. Brown said they were currently funding road maintenance by the money they had within their budget, but they had the ability to bond for road construction that would allow them to do more work at one time instead over a period of time. A bond gave short term satisfaction, but your hands were tied for a period of time paying back the money you've borrowed.

Councilmember Smiley wasn't in favor of asking folks because some residents lived on poorer roads than others. He felt it was their job to find what was best and represent the residents.

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox wasn't in favor of a bond. She approved extending the millage.

Mr. Brown said that Council should discuss the possibility of putting the question before the voters to maintain, decrease or increase the millage collection for road projects within the City.

Mayor Beagle couldn't picture anything coming together quickly enough for this November's ballot. He thought it would be best to take their time and obtain as much information possible so they could successfully inform the residents.

Councilmember Gottschall asked what the ideal PASER rating should be annually. Mr. Sikma liked to keep the average rating above 5. Councilmember Gottschall thought when they reviewed data, they needed to ask themselves what amount of funding would it take to keep the roads above a 5 PASER rating over a ten-year period. He understood the City operated on a Ten-Year Capital Improvement Plan. Given that the roads lasted roughly 20-years, perhaps they create a plan for only roads. He figured they had to perform their own math to figure out what it would take today and for the future.

Mr. Brown commented that a 1 mill increase wouldn't get the City roads to a 5 on the PASER rating scale.

Councilmember Behrmann thought they needed to be cautious because they could potentially be asking voters to approve multiple millage proposals at the same time.

Councilmember Sharpe agreed with Councilmember Behrmann. He noticed an enormous amount of 4 PASER ratings throughout the City's roadways. He figured at some point they would reach capacity but wouldn't be able to make all the repairs at one time. They needed to understand how much money it would cost, how many mills would generate that goal amount, where they would use the funding in year 1, 2, 3, etc. They needed to know more than just the PASER ratings. If they needed to sell property owners on this millage, they must have a dollar figure, not conversations of mills and PASER ratings. He felt they needed to hear data on dollars, lane miles, which roads/subdivisions and the course of time. He would like to find out if they could work within the amount of money they had before they went to residents asking for more.

Mayor Beagle stated that 1 mill was equivalent to \$700,000.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik figured the tax payers welcomed well-constructed and maintained roads. He agreed they needed to acquire data and stated he was in favor of a continuation of the road millage.

Councilmember Gottschall was curious to find out how fast HRC could get back to them with quality information. He said the money they had came from a taxable income budget so if they voted on the proposal next year, they wouldn't be able to make any impact for two years. He didn't want to cut corners or rush any decisions, but he would like to put some pressure on HRC to get the information back relatively soon.

Mr. Brown stated the additional operating millage and sidewalk millage expired in 2024 and the road millage expired in 2026.

Councilmember Behrmann asked if they didn't want to wait until 2026 to create a new local road millage or if they wanted to create a supplemental millage and they asked voters to renew the road millage in 2026.

Mr. Brown said they would replace the existing millage and change it to a different amount.

Mayor Beagle believed the consensus of Council was to obtain adequate data so they could move forward in the road millage process.

Councilmember Gottschall asked they obtain figures from HRC that would give updated numbers plus what it would take on a 20-year basis to get the roads to a 5 or above on the PASER scale.

Councilmember Sharpe wanted the data behind the ratings and the average expense it took to get them to those ratings. He would also like to see a plan and dollar amount.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- 1.) Recommendation to Approve a One-Year Contract with Oakland County Equalization Division for Assessing Services for the Period of July 1, 2022 Through June 30, 2023 and Authorize Mayor Patrick Beagle and Clerk Catherine Buck to Sign the Contract**

**CM-06-75-22:** Motion and seconded made by Deputy Mayor Rzeznik and Councilmember Gronlund-Fox to approve a one-year Contract with Oakland County Equalization Division for Assessing Services for the Period of July 1, 2022 Through June 30, 2023 and authorize Mayor Patrick Beagle and Clerk Catherine Buck to sign the Contract.

Mr. Brown explained that this contract was to provide Assessing Services from Oakland County. This includes appraisals of property, processing of real and personal property affidavits, attendance at Board of Review meetings, defense on all Tax Tribunal appeals, and assessment roll maintenance. There was a 4% cost increase reflected, which brings in an estimated cost of \$90,802. The cost would increase to \$94,434 next fiscal year.

Mayor Beagle said that in years past, we signed a multi-year contract. Mr. Brown confirmed that was correct. He said this was for one year. He heard there might be something different coming from Oakland County next year.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik asked if most of our surrounding communities used Oakland County for assessing services. Mr. Brown said that the majority don't have their own assessor. It is difficult to provide that level of service without a very large budget. He recommended that we continue for another year. Deputy Mayor Rzeznik said he did support this.

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox said she would be surprised if we could get an assessor for this amount or less.

**Vote:**

**Motion Carried**

**2.) Recommendation to Authorize an Extension and Third Contract Addendum, Effective July 1, 2022, of a Professional Services Agreement with Laura Cloutier to Provide Services to the Wixom Downtown Development Authority as Executive Director for a Period Ending June 30, 2023**

**CM-06-76-22:** Motion and seconded made by Councilmember Smiley and Deputy Mayor Rzeznik to authorize an extension and third Contract Addendum, effective July 1, 2022, of a Professional Services Agreement with Laura Cloutier to provide services to the Wixom Downtown Development Authority as Executive Director for a period ending June 30, 2023.

Mr. Brown indicated there was a prior Council action in March of 2022 that extended this contract so the expiration date would match to our fiscal year. This was for an additional one-year contract extension, from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023. Action was taken by the DDA and they will be using DDA funding to increase the annual cost from \$45,000 to \$50,000 annually. Laura Cloutier is the contractor that is providing the services to the DDA as the Executive Director.

Mayor Beagle commented that the DDA Chairperson, Vanessa Willett, and the Co-Chairperson, Kristin Rzeznik, were present.

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox said there wasn't anything negative about Ms. Cloutier's work or services that she provided, but she couldn't support a 10% increase in a contract. She called to ask questions because she was confused as to why it was coming to Council if it was in the DDA's budget. Her understanding was that's the way it has always been. She said she just couldn't support a 10% increase.

DDA Chairperson, Vanessa Willett, said the initial contract was approved by the City Council with an amount not to exceed \$50,000. This was the third year of that contract. Ms. Cloutier has put in additional hours, well beyond the minimum, especially with the first and second years being in COVID. There has never been an increase. We are not increasing, but maximizing the contract value that was previously approved by City Council for this position. In addition, the DDA did budget for this year at \$50,000, so it was included. There was a request of an increase to more of a full-time Executive Director and with the addition of the DDA helping to share in some City staffing costs, the DDA decided to keep it where it was to see how the next year goes. She continued by saying that the responsibilities of that position have increased along with The Junction, the activities, the funding and projects. Ms. Cloutier has put a lot of hours in getting volunteers and committee members for a lot of activities for the City.

Councilmember Sharpe asked how many hours a week Ms. Cloutier worked. DDA Chairperson Willett said the initial hours during the first year and a half were closer to 33 hours per week. When you start a new position, it takes longer to do certain tasks. She said they have increased her responsibilities since the contract began. She thought she averaged 28 to 30 hours per week. She was confident that other



DDAs paid significantly more and she thought Ms. Cloutier had earned that as a contractor. She is not a City employee; we are not paying benefits for her.

Mr. Brown commented that under Section 1, Duties and Performance, of the Contract, the last paragraph talks about an hourly estimate of what would be required. It indicates that it was unlikely that the level of effort would be less than 25 hours on average. He said she was working hours beyond that and that would be part of the justification for the increase.

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox said she appreciated the additional information as far as the additional hours and the comparable with other communities. She thought that would have been nice to have as more justification because just looking at the report, it looks like almost an 11% increase.

Councilmember Smiley said his understanding was that this was a relatively new position. It has been a little over two years and she started at \$45,000. It was an evolving job and after two years, the DDA allowed the \$50,000 in the budget. He heard she works tremendously and the DDA likes the job she is doing. He was fine with this.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik added that the independent contractor was also required to have their own insurance policy and pay their own employee taxes. He strongly supported this.

**Vote:**

**Motion Carried**

**3.) Recommendation to Renew a One-Year Professional Services Agreement for Information Technology Support Services with BPI Information Systems of Southfield, Michigan at an Annual Cost of \$76,287 with Funding Allocated from Account #101-228-801.282 IT Support and Authorize Mayor Patrick Beagle to Sign the Renewal Agreement**

**CM-06-77-22:** Motion and seconded made by Councilmembers Smiley and Behrmann to renew a one-year Professional Services Agreement for Information Technology Support Services with BPI Information Systems of Southfield, Michigan at an annual cost of \$76,287 with funding allocated from Account #101-228-801.282 IT Support and authorize Mayor Patrick Beagle to sign the agreement.

Mr. Brown stated that this related to an existing contract being extended for an additional year. It reflects a 2.5% increase in service fees, which was reasonable. It was based on the number of computers that are supported through the contract. The change in that was negligible so the increase was also negligible. It resulted in the projected expense being \$76,287 for the upcoming year. He was advocating that made sense given the critical nature of the relationship with the IT service provider. We are also in the middle of penetration testing and he thought it would behoove us to continue to have those services through our IT support provided by BPI. We could take a look at bidding this service out next year as he felt the time to bid it out was not appropriate in 2022.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik asked if they were also assisting us on reviewing our cyber policy or insurance policy. He wondered if that was provided through MMRMA. Mr. Brown said that we do have insurance through there and we have looked at that through BPI in the past. We felt we were solid on that front. He stated that Mr. Blackburn recently retired and that was why he was not here. Deputy Mayor Rzeznik commented that municipalities were #2 on the ransomware target for the last two years. He wanted to make sure our cyber policies were keeping pace with what goes on in the world.

Councilmember Smiley said he would miss Mr. Blackburn. He asked if the Council would get the results of the penetration testing when it was completed. Mr. Brown replied yes. He expected that to be completed during the first six months of the next fiscal year.

**Vote:**

**Motion Carried**

**4.) Recommendation to Authorize Resolutions for Special Liquor License Applications for Events at Sibley Square Park on June 23, 2022 and July 21, 2022 and for an Event at the Community Center on December 2, 2022**

**CM-06-78-22:** Motion and seconded made by Deputy Mayor Rzeznik and Councilmember Gronlund-Fox to authorize resolutions for Special Liquor License Applications for events at Sibley Square Park on June 23, 2022 and July 21, 2022 and for an event at the Community Center on December 2, 2022.

Mayor Beagle said this was a routine item we do every year. This will allow us to have a beer tent for the Lite the Night, the Hot Blues and BBQ, and the Tree Lighting Ceremony. Ms. Magee said that we are allowed 12 special liquor licenses each year and we are applying for three.

**Vote:**

**Motion Carried**

**5.) Recommendation to Approve an Agreement for Auxiliary Sheriff's Deputy Services with the Oakland County Sheriff's Office and Authorize Mayor Patrick Beagle to Sign the Agreement**

**CM-06-79-22:** Motion and seconded made by Councilmembers Smiley and Sharpe to approve an Agreement for Auxiliary Sheriff's Deputy Services with the Oakland County Sheriff's Office and authorize Mayor Patrick Beagle to sign the Agreement.

Director Moore said this was a three-year agreement between the City of Wixom and Oakland County for auxiliary sheriff's deputy services. Since 2015, we have supplemented the ranks of the Wixom Police Department for the fireworks event with a supervisor and 13-15 deputy sheriffs. When he first became Chief, the number was 15-16. Over the years, he reevaluated that and his plan this year is to have a supervisor, a sergeant and 13 deputies.

Councilmember Sharpe said he was totally in support of this. He thought a presence was a great deterrent. He wondered how much that would cost. Director Moore said that he budgets for this every year and this year, it will be about \$6,400.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik agreed that presence was a deterrent. He recalled that for the last seven years, we have had no issues. He supported this.

**Vote:**

**Motion Carried**

**6.) Recommendation to Award a Bid to Highway Maintenance and Construction of Romulus, MI for Chip Seal of Howell Lane at a Cost of \$37,083.54 from the Capital Improvement Plan Account #411-283-976.355 – Road Replacement in Fiscal Year 2022/2023 and Approve the Related Budget Amendment**

**CM-06-80-22:** Motion and seconded made by Councilmembers Gronlund-Fox and Sharpe to award a bid to Highway Maintenance and Construction of Romulus, MI for Chip Seal of Howell Lane at a cost of \$37,083.54 from the Capital Improvement Plan Account #411-283-976.355 – Road Replacement in Fiscal Year 2022/2023 and approve the related budget amendment.

Mr. Sikma said he was looking to place a chip seal overlay on Howell Drive. It will be a 3/8-inch gravel base with an asphalt fog seal over it. It will be similar to the roads that we do in the parks. We get about 5-7 years out of the chip seal. He stated that we are only going to the fences at DPW. We will have some work in the future to do toward Spurt and at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. We have some upgrades to the Wastewater Treatment Plant that are programmed in and we don't feel that it would be of value to go any further than the fences at this time. We have to plan this for next fiscal year. We had it programmed for this fiscal year and Highway Maintenance cannot get to it until September.

Councilmember Gottschall asked if this was the same company that does the parks. Mr. Sikma replied yes.

Councilmember Sharpe said he was a frequent user of those roads because he takes advantage of Spurt. If there was a road in Wixom other than Wixom Road and Potter that needed to be redone, it was this one. He clarified this would just go from Charms Road to the fences of the DPW offices. Mr. Sikma said that was correct. Councilmember Sharpe said that Spurt brings in a lot of big truck traffic and he knew they paid us something. He asked if we take the wear and tear on the facilities into account. Mr. Sikma said that we do take that into account and we will look at that again when we update their contract. They do fund \$50,000 to \$100,000 a year into the program. He stated this was coming out of the ten-year capital plan.

Mr. Brown noted that Howell Lane was named after our former DPW Director, Mike Howell, who passed away at a very young age.

**Vote:**

**Motion Carried**

**7.) Recommendation to Award the Water System Cross-Connection Control Program Contract for Five Years to Hydro Corp, Inc. of Troy, Michigan for an Annual Amount of \$49,128 for the First Two Years and Three Additional Years with an Increase of up to 5%, Authorize Mayor Patrick Beagle and City Clerk Catherine Buck to Sign the Agreement and Approve the Associated Budget Amendment**

**CM-06-81-22:** Motion and seconded made by Deputy Mayor Rzeznik and Councilmember Smiley to award the Water System Cross-Connection Control Program Contract for five years to Hydro Corp, Inc. of Troy, Michigan for an annual amount of \$49,128 for the first two years and three additional years with an increase of up to 5%, authorize Mayor Patrick Beagle and City Clerk Catherine Buck to sign the agreement and approve the associated budget amendment.

Mr. Sikma said part of the water distribution requirements from the State was to verify that we eliminate cross connection to our drinking water system. They go through the residential areas and require any irrigation system to have a backflow prevention apparatus that is certified by a plumber. If they do not wish to participate in that program, they would have to dig out their irrigation system. If we ever lost pressure in our system and the irrigation system was on, the water has a potential of coming back into our drinking water system. The residential areas have fertilizers and insecticides that could get into the drinking water system. The backflow preventers prevent that. Industrial areas have high priority pieces that are inspected on an annual basis. Those have a higher probability and a higher potential for impact to our water system. We do those on an annual basis. There is a system in the middle of that where industrial and commercials are inspected every three years. Over the last three or four years, we have increased the residentially considerably. Those are inspected every ten years; the low impact ones are every three years and the high priority ones are annually.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik said he was approached by a Hillsborough resident who was quite irate asking what this was. He told him the program was put in place by a Public Act in 2007 and it had been going on for years. He was surprised it took this long to get to Hillsborough because he has lived there for 27 years. Deputy Mayor Rzeznik suggested that something be put into the next water bills explaining what the cross-connection program is and explain what they have to do. Most of the time, they just need a plumber to do an inspection. Mr. Sikma said Oakland County has a list of certified plumbers who are capable of doing this kind of inspection.

Councilmember Behrmann asked if they were picking homeowners at random or if they were doing subdivisions at a time. Mr. Sikma explained that they are systematically going through the entire residential areas. Each year they are given the list of residents from the utility billing system. Councilmember Behrmann asked what the average cost was for the homeowner. Mr. Sikma said it can vary. He thought it was between \$50-\$100, depending on the irrigation system that they have. If you can get your neighbors together, they can inspect several at a time which can bring the price down.

Councilmember Gottschall asked what Department the Appropriation of Retained Earnings was under. Mr. Sikma said that the 591 accounts are all in the Water

budget. Councilmember Gottschall asked if this was built into what we charge for water and Mr. Sikma replied yes. He said we have anticipated over the last few years that it was about \$38,000 and it has gone up because of the increases in the number of inspections. Councilmember Gottschall asked if there would ever be a point where we wouldn't need a vendor to do it. Mr. Sikma explained that this was a Public Act for the drinking water systems and he didn't expect it to go away in his lifetime. He said that he did talk about this and we could work that in in future contracts. We do have members on staff who are able to do some of the inspections but it was a matter of time and expense. Councilmember Gottschall asked if we bid this out and Mr. Sikma said yes. They were the only one to respond.

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox asked if we had anyone on staff that was certified to do this. Mr. Sikma said that we have someone who is certified to test but not maintain the program. Councilmember Gronlund-Fox said she liked the idea of putting something on the water bills to explain the cross-connection program. Most people have no idea what that is. Lastly, she asked how many inspections they do for us each year. Mr. Sikma said they do just over 300 inspections a year. We have 3,600 accounts and 150 of those are done annually. Our compliance rate is running about 85%.

**Vote:**

**Motion Carried**

**8.) Recommendation to Authorize a Resolution to Adopt a Revised Policy Relative to the Review and Granting of Financial (Poverty) Hardship Exemptions by the City of Wixom Board of Review**

**CM-06-82-22:** Motion and seconded made by Deputy Mayor Rzeknik and Councilmember Behrmann to authorize the following resolution to adopt a revised policy relative to the review and granting of financial (poverty) hardship exemptions by the City of Wixom Board of Review:

**CITY OF WIXOM  
RESOLUTION NO. 2022-40**

**CITY ADOPTED POLICY RELATIVE TO THE REVIEW AND GRANTING OF FINANCIAL (POVERTY) HARDSHIP EXEMPTIONS BY THE CITY OF WIXOM BOARD OF REVIEW**

WHEREAS, P.A. 390 of 1994, which amended Section 7u of Act No. 206 of the Public Act of 1893, as amended by Act No. 313 of the Public Acts of 1993, being sections 211.7u of the Michigan Compiled Laws, requires that the governing body of the local assessing unit determine and make available to the public the policy and guidelines used by the Board of Review in granting reductions in property assessments due to limited income and assets, referred to as "poverty exemptions."

AND WHEREAS, P.A. 253 of 2020 also amended Section 7u of Act No. 206 of the Public Act of 1893, as amended by Act No. 313 of the Public Acts of 1993, being sections 211.7u of the Michigan Compiled Laws, and required the use of state prescribed forms and limited to certain percentages the exemption amount which could be granted.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that to be eligible for a poverty exemption in the City of Wixom,

- An applicant or applicants must physically occupy and be the "sole" owner(s) of the property for which the exemption is requested.

- The subject property must be classified as an “improved single family residential” or “residential condominium” property with a valid Homeowner’s Principal Residence Exemption currently in effect.
- The applicant or applicants must complete and timely file the Michigan Department of Treasury Form 5737, Application for MCL 211.7u Poverty Exemption. The application with all supporting documentation must be received by the City after January 1<sup>st</sup> but before the day prior to the last day of the Board of Review session at which the property owner is requesting consideration.
- The applicant must include with the application a copy of all documents required by Form 5737.
- The applicant must supply a copy of a current driver’s license or other form of identification.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the applicant’s total household income, cannot exceed one and one-half times the poverty income figure, as reported by household size, in the “Federal Poverty Guidelines” updated annually in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The annual allowable income includes the income for all persons residing in the principal residence.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the value of the applicant’s total assets, excluding the property for which the exemption is requested and one automobile, but including all savings, retirement accounts, stocks and bonds and other real estate, cannot exceed two times the poverty income figure, as reported by household size, in the “Federal Poverty Guidelines” updated annually in the Federal Register by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any reduction in the Taxable Value of a property is granted for one year only and must be applied for and reviewed annually based on the applicant’s current situation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in reviewing the application and all supporting documentation, the Board of Review will consider income, assets, and all other matters as permitted by statute.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Review may grant a 100%, 50% or 25% reduction in taxable value for the tax year in which the exemption is granted.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any prior resolutions adopting Financial (Poverty) Hardship Exemption Guidelines is hereby repealed and rescinded.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that to conform with the provisions of P.A. 390 of 1994, this resolution is hereby given immediate effect and will stay in effect for subsequent years until amended or voided.

Mr. Brown indicated that this was related to financial or poverty hardship exemptions that are potentially requested by homeowners who are in a bad financial situation and they cannot afford to pay their property taxes. Those requests are heard by our Board of Review. In October of 2020, the Council authorized a resolution to adopt a policy and in January of 2021, the State Tax Commission came up with some additional changes that they were requiring. That was brought back to Council for another action in February of 2021 where changes were made to the policy. In the last several days, we started hearing there would be another issue to this. We had an audit performed through the State Tax Commission of our policies that are set by our assessor. We have learned that there were problems with the wording in our policy that was determined by the State Tax Commission. He apologized for adding this to the agenda but it is due by June 24<sup>th</sup>.

If the Council doesn't take action by that date, the Board of Review would not be able to hear cases in July.

**Vote:**

**Motion Carried**

**CALL TO THE PUBLIC:**

George Spencer, 51225 Pontiac Trail, said he was addressing the City Council in regards to a proposal that he sent to Council about a strategic plan for the Fire Department. He said strategic plans are critically important. It is not just a catch phrase or something that we do to fit in with the rest of the cities around us. It is critically important in charting a new direction for your new stand-alone Department, which has not been a stand-alone Fire Department for about 19 years. A critical part of this strategic plan would be performing a SCOT evaluation or analysis. It is done by an outside individual. SCOT stands for the Strengths of the Department, the Challenges that the Department has, the Opportunities that the Department has to serve the public, and the Treats that exist to those opportunities. From the SCOT analysis, the information is developed to take to City leadership and our key community members so we can start to develop a plan of action. A plan of action typically has about six to ten items in which the Department is going to move towards achieving. These items are then boiled down to smart goals, specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timeframe which considerably helps in the management of future budgets as well as giving Council an idea of what is coming down the road. Typically, strategic plans are done for about five years so you know what the Fire Department is going to be asking for and we know what the performance of that Department is going to be for the next five years. Good strategic plans can also be continued so there is a reanalysis of the Department every year or two so we can continue that planning process. There are no surprises, except for the inevitable changes in government that we all have to deal with. There is a good plan out there so we know what is coming. Some people have said we would never want to put extra work onto the Fire Department right now considering the critical staffing that they have. He said when he worked in the State of Washington, he worked in a group of fire chiefs who managed large scale wild fires. They might have 100-200 people working on the line at the time, but the planning section was always doing planning for the next operational period or the next day. They did not burden the operational people with that plan. It was done from its own separate planning group that was developing the resources and the action plan for the next operational period. He said he has volunteered to help with the strategic plan for the City. We would not be burdening the Department with extra work. However, after the action items are boiled down, it gives a new Department Head some very specific and good guidance so they know where to start. As a fire chief, if he had a strategic plan like this in the last two departments he went to, it would have really been a benefit instead of trying to figure out things as he went. If we start sooner than later, we could have a plan for those action items charted out by mid-August, which was the hiring range for the new Fire Chief. Strategic planning can sometimes be tough. We have to set our egos aside and be very honest when that SCOT analysis is done, but when it is done properly, we can really develop a comprehensive plan with no surprises. It will not only benefit members of the Department, but members of the City and our constituents.

James Lowe, 2945 Maganser Drive, wanted to address the Council about the poisoned fish in Loon Lake. This happened four years ago from a local business and he lost access to a natural food source. He wondered how he would be made whole. He said he lives on the block of death. When this happened, he contracted Legionnaires disease. He spent ten days on do not resuscitate. There have been three deaths in five houses on his block, two cancers and kidney disease. He knew that there was a study going on about PFAS affecting human health. When the manufacturers are told it is poison, they will make some minor adjustments to the chemical compound and say it is safe. He knows enough not to eat toxic fish but he sees the bald eagle down there. Our national bird is being poisoned in Wixom. He sees the osprey being poisoned in Wixom. We pay millage to the Metro Parks. They build a platform for the osprey to nest and it is being poisoned here in Wixom. That water runs all the way down the Huron River poisoning all the fish. It runs into Lake Erie, a Great Lake, where 80% of our Country's drinking water comes from. He asked if this would be the City's legacy. He didn't know what has been done or even said for the last four years. He asked who this company was. He knew they changed their name. He asked for their address. If he catches a fish, he will deliver it. He could throw the fish in the pond or deliver it to the City Manager's Office. He hoped something can be done and he hoped something from this Council will be done. He said he was following the chain of command. He came to Council first. The County will be next, then the State, and then the feds. If no one is going to do anything about this, he wondered if we wanted environmental activists coming to Wixom. Somebody asked him what his concern was with this and he replied clean water. He asked who did it and where are they. It is against the law in this country to poison birds. Our national bird is being poisoned. He asked who was going to be held accountable. He hoped the Council would do something right on this issue. He thanked them for listening.

#### **CITY MANAGER COMMENTS:**

Mr. Brown said that the Community Services team recently received recognition from a vendor at a recent event. He congratulated them and brought attention to the Schedule of Events.

Councilmember Smiley asked for an update on the Highland Park water issue. Mr. Brown explained that they haven't been paying their water bills over the years and it was now being assessed to communities across the GLWA service area, including the City of Wixom. Mr. Sikma stated that we received information from GLWA recently saying they are taking this off of our bill. We are planning to negotiate with them on future rates based on pressures and the water usage that we have.

Councilmember Behrmann said three weeks ago he asked whether or not residents could sign up to get agendas for the Planning Commission and ZBA meetings. At that time, Mr. Brown indicated he would be getting back to him. Mr. Brown said that he would provide an update as he didn't have the response in front of him at this time. There was a personnel change in his Department that had caused the delay.

#### **COUNCIL COMMENTS:**

**Councilmember Behrmann** stated that during the last three weeks, he had the opportunity to walk the new portion of the Air Line Trail. It is coming together really



well. He was able to go right down to Pontiac Trail where it ended. He also walked the trail behind the City Hall complex and that was also coming together very well. Both of those projects came together quickly. He has been to the concerts during the last two weeks and both of those seemed to be very well attended. The Employee Appreciation Dinner was also well done. He thanked everyone who put those things together.

**Councilmember Gottschall** thanked Kay Ash for all her dedication on the Cemetery Board during the last 18 years. He enjoyed the Employee Picnic. It was very well put together. On a more serious topic, and related to the questions he asked Chief Geistler, as well as the strategic plan Mr. Spencer sent each of the Councilmembers, he thought that would be a phenomenal thing to have for our Department. We all recognize that was somewhere we have been struggling with during the last few years in terms of recruitment, having a plan, scheduling, and retention. He hoped we could engage Mr. Spencer because he has a lot of experience in Wixom and other departments. This hasn't been discussed since he has been on Council. He thought it would be great to have for any City department. It was very concerning to keep hearing we are having 10% or more of our calls get responded to by one person and that doesn't even meet the State's requirements for medical transport. He didn't know how we were even allowed to operate. For two years, a number of Council have been urging to get a deal done and to get a schedule and recruiting worked out. It has gone nowhere for the last two years. There seems to be some disconnect between the Council wanting to get something done and the firefighters union wanting to get something done. It gets caught up in the bureaucracy. The Council does not get updates. He confirmed with other Councilmembers who feel they are left in the dark. He thought that translated to the firefighters also feeling that it takes an enormous amount of time to get anything done. He didn't disagree. It has been two years to get a deal done. It is insane. He felt like if it were a private business, people would have been finding other jobs by now. He didn't know if it was an attorney thing or a bureaucracy thing. He has said it before and he feels more strongly now. He would rather just have a meeting between City Council and the representatives from the fire union to work it all out. He could guarantee we could get that done. He didn't know what took so long to get it worked out. We have seen morale plummet over there, as well as numbers. We are down to eight people to cover the entire City. If it takes much longer, the fear is that every call we will need assistance from our neighboring communities. It will be Commerce and Novi trying to cover us. It is completely inappropriate. We have budgeted the money to hire people and we have seen no action on recruitment. We have even seen people get pushed away because we kind of work in the opposite direction. He didn't understand the delay. He wished we had some strength here in terms of setting up a meeting. He thought that was the Council's prerogative since ultimately it was the Council's vote anyway. He didn't know how anybody else would feel about that. He was past the time of waiting to get a deal done. He has been frustrated for the last two years and he thought it was an absolute disgrace that we have eight residents covering the entire City. They don't have time for their families, they don't have time for anything other than constantly being on call. That is a shame.

**Councilmember Gronlund-Fox** expressed her condolences to the family of Dennis Smith.

**Councilmember Sharpe** thanked Ms. Magee and her Parks and Recreation team for a wonderful picnic for the staff and volunteers. There was a lot of good food and good socializing. Also, he reviewed the Cemetery Board minutes from June of 2021 and in that meeting it said the columbarium benches were on order. Here it is, a year later. He said he was looking forward to upgrading his future home with those benches and was hoping they were coming soon. Also, he agreed with Councilmember Behrmann regarding the Air Line Trail. He rode it to Pontiac Trail and now the concrete is all torn up. He looked forward to getting that quickly sorted out so we can enjoy that Trail.

**Councilmember Smiley** thanked Kay Ash for her 18 years of service on the Cemetery Board. He was sad to hear about the passing of Dennis Smith and offered his condolences to his friends and family.

**Deputy Mayor Rzeznik** extended his condolences to the family of Dennis Smith. He worked with him very closely on a project when he was our go-to person before Ken Pike. It was a pleasure working with him. He thanked Kay Ash. He also took a ride on Phase 2 of the Trail. He went all the way to the western limit. He was told by friends that the Huron Valley portion was all torn up so he didn't go any further. Let's do everything in our power with the Trailway Council, the City of Wixom and RCOC to create traffic calming in that stretch between Wixom Road and the Korex building. Yesterday he watched someone try to race the light and he made it. That Trail is going to be awfully close to Pontiac Trail, so whatever calming measures we can use would be helpful, like planters or barricades, crossing people signs or blinking yellow lights. The awareness needs to be there and the extension of that 25-mph speed limit all the way to Korex would achieve that goal. The gravel and seeding all look really great.

**Mayor Beagle** offered his condolences to the Smith family on the passing of Dennis. He thanked Ms. Magee and her staff for a great volunteer and employee picnic.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:21 p.m.

Catherine Buck  
City Clerk

Approved 6-28-2022
-----------------------