

CITY OF GROVE CITY, OHIO

COUNCIL MINUTES

November 12, 2019

Special Meeting

The special meeting of Council was called to order by President Robinette at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 4035 Broadway.

Roll was called and the following members were present:

Roby Schottke

Christine Houk

Steve Robinette

1. Ms. Houk moved to excuse Mr. Davis and Mayor Stage; seconded by Mr. Schottke.

Mr. Schottke

Yes

Ms. Houk

Yes

Mr. Robinette

Yes

* *Mr. Berry arrived at 6:05 p.m.*

Mr. Robinette recognized Ms. Houk, Chairman of Finance, for discussion under said Committee.

1. Ms. Houk explained that this was a prelude to a budget discussion with some of Grove City's partners for 2020.

Mr. Andy Furr, Heart of Grove City Director (formerly Town Center, Inc.), explained that two of the Board's goals were to rebrand Town Center Inc. and obtain a 501c3 permit. Some felt that there was a disconnect with the organizations name regarding what they do and who they represent. So, they chose "Heart of Grove City" because it better represents the organization and what they do. He said they have obtained a 501c3 in this new name. He said 2019 has been fantastic and Town Center businesses are doing well. He said they only lost one business this year, but the newest business - Chandler is doing extremely well. Mr. Furr announced that Whit's Frozen Yogurt is coming to the Town Center. All the events went well and next year, he said there are more events planned to bring more people to Town Center. He said the Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area is taking shape; becoming a Certified Local Government is also underway; and they continue to diligently communicate with all area residents. He noted that they are in the second year of a three-year contract with the City. He said the monies received from the City will account for 1/3rd of their budget next year. He said membership is always difficult to achieve 1/3rd, but their events are bringing in monies to make up for the loss in membership. He said they pay \$10,000.00 to the City for event services and \$4,000.00 for audited financials and are looking to reduce that. He said with the 501c3, they will be able to receive charitable contributions and apply for some grants.

Mr. Schottke commented that many people don't understand the DORA and asked what could be done to explain it better. Mr. Furr said that the City and their organization have an explanation on their websites and there is a flyer in the DORA locations. He said they will try to get it on social media more. Mr. Schottke replied and said that younger generations haven't asked him about DORA, and that it would be beneficial for older generations if DORA was in the city newspaper. Mr. Furr said there were many articles in the local papers when the DORA was first approved. He said he has shied away from the newspapers because of the delivery issues. Mr. Schottke asked Mr. Furr if there was anything he sees in other communities that he thinks should be in downtown Grove City. Mr. Furr said no. He doesn't want The Town Center to be like anyone else. He said he does take the ideas from our community and good things he sees in his travels and tries to implement those.

Ms. Houk commented that they will be in the last year of a 3 year contract and it is a reimbursement arrangement. Mr. Furr said that is correct. He said each month he visits the City's Finance Director with all receipts, bank accounts and spreadsheets so he has an accurate account for every penny of the reimbursement check. Ms. Houk asked if membership is still offered. Mr. Furr said yes. They now call them supporters and donors. He said they will always try to acquire supporters and donors. Ms. Houk asked if the 503c6 would be terminated. Mr. Furr said no. They have six years left on that trade name and will keep it as some events are under it. Ms. Houk asked about the audit expenses. Mr. Furr said he does ask for reimbursement for that expense.

2. Mr. Matt Yerkes, Cultivate/Rev One, explained that Cultivate is an incubator business for small business owners, and explained that businesses don't have to be in their building to be involved in the company. He said Cultivate is an ambassador for the City of Grove City. He volunteers over 1,000 hours to this business. He said they have leveraged the \$50,000.00 from the City with an additional \$70,000.00 of resources and another \$89,000.00 of resources to be designated across the nation. He said some of that is cash, but most is in-kind donations. He said it is their collaboration with the City and connection with Rev1 that had connected them to the Region and made such an impact. He said many other communities are trying emulate what we have. He said Rev1 is at the heart of the regional strategy. He said they have educational networking events to help small businesses get connected. He said they have hosted 13 companies in their building that equate to 39 jobs; and helped nine businesses outside their building that employ 39 people. He said for 2020 they want to keep going forward with the program to help entrepreneurs and help small businesses be successful and grow.

Mr. Robinette asked how many businesses they've helped that are still running. Mr. Yerkes said he doesn't that the data tonight, as they have changed the way they report that and they are now tracking the data for the companies in their building and companies that are within Grove City. They have six businesses this year that graduated out of their building.

Mr. Schottke then asked what information they need to keep up with the businesses that Cultivate has helped. Ms. Kristy Campbell, Rev1 Ventures stepped in and said they track all their clients, but it is difficult to track those who come to an event and don't become clients. She then began to talk about Rev1. She said it is non-profit, very focused on helping entrepreneurs build a good foundation for running a successful company. They have four profit funds. She said they serve about 1,000 entrepreneurs a year and invest in about 30 companies a year. She also said it provides about 10,000 jobs a year. She said the work that they do with Matt and the City is really important because it allows them to expand their support beyond the core and provide more unique services. She said this is a gem in the community and could be applied to other areas in the Region. She said the company is also very proud of the work they are doing in diversity inclusion. She said more than half of their clients are woman/minority owned businesses.

Ms. Houk asked Mr. Yerkes to provide Council a copy of his report, and as the city assesses the effectiveness of this partnership, can Council get an update on that data. Mr. Yerkes stated that they submit to the Development Department impact reports monthly and ask their clients survey questions semi-annually. He said the Development Department has their Partner Report for October and could forward that to Council. Ms. Houk said they will be looking at the timeline of the next agreement. Mr. Yerkes said their current contract is up at the end of December and they are hoping to get another contract for next year. Mr. Boso, City Admin., explained that to fund this organization, there was a line item in the 2019 budget and there will be a line item in the Development Department budget for 2020 to do the same.

3. Ms. Babbert, Board Member of Visit Grove City, handed out a presentation to all of Council. She said Visit Grove City is a destination marketing organization that is funded by 1.5% of the Bed Tax. She said they put those funds to work as a "Destination for Adventure". She said 97.6% of their budget is from that Bed Tax and 2.3% is from their store. She shared expenditures of the organization. She said

their target audience is someone looking for a getaway. She said we are Columbus' closest neighbor to the south and Grove City has a lot to offer visitors. She explained their Core Strategies; their scholarship programs; their marketing events – Adventure Treks; and their Trailblazer Awards. She said we have 1,398 guest rooms. There are many hotels slated for Columbus and surrounding communities, which is risky if there becomes an oversaturation of guest rooms. She said without a Convention space, we stand to lose those visits to other communities. She said we used to be known as the City with Beulah Park Racetrack and the Balloon Festival. The loss of both of those requires something else in our backyard to drive people here. She said their plan for 2020 includes a Study to see if there is a demand/need for a unique destination space in Grove City.

Mr. Robinette asked out Visit Grove City markets Grove City and where. Ms. Babbert said that's an all day, every day effort. She said they attend trade shows to market Grove City; they have a large social media presence; and they participate in all local events. She said their main goal is to bring outsiders in.

Ms. Houk asked how we will lose the most accessible community to Columbus. She said once the construction on I-71 is completed, we should be the most convenient and accessible area for Greenlawn and Columbus. Ms. Babbert agreed, but the oversaturation is a concern. Mr. Robinette said when the hotel at the Racino was built, we saw a dip in hotel stays. As Columbus continues to grow, we will need events and something to draw those visitors here.

4. Mr. Doug Arsenal, COTA, shared a promotional video of the new Cota Plus program. She shared statistics for ridership on the "First Mile/Last Mile" program and their marketing efforts. They have been working directly with companies to show their employees how to use the service. He said they are building some good relationships and are pleased with the initial results of ridership.

Mr. Michael Loges, COTA, explained the slideshow presentation and provided more statistics. He said they have just announced a Voucher Card system for those who do not have a credit card or debit card, so they can use the service as well. He said they have been working with Mt. Carmel to make sure we are meeting the needs of their employees/customers. Mt. Carmel purchased rider vouchers that they will hand out for free rides to their customers. He said they are working to sustain the service.

Mr. Robinette asked for a breakdown of point-to-point service and connection service. Mr. Arsenal said they would send those statistics to Council.

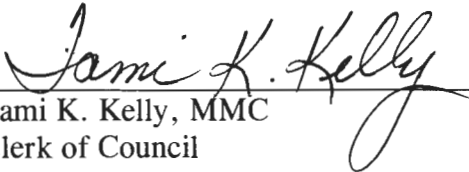
Mr. Schottke asked how many riders are repeat customers. Mr. Loges said about 75%. Mr. Schottke asked if companies are advertising with COTA. Mr. Loges said they have spoken with 40 businesses of size and 27 of those are in the Zone. He said some of them are marketing this program when they post jobs. He said they will pursue partnering with the Chamber; participate in job fairs, etc. to market and educate the public.

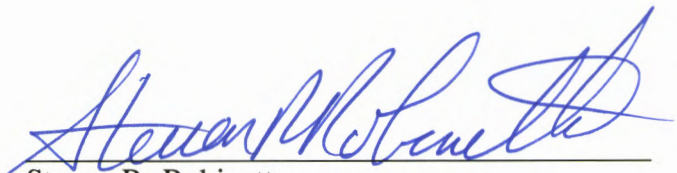
Mr. Robinette said Council approved a Phase I and Phase II program. He asked when they will open on Phase II. Mr. Loges said they will do a survey to see how it's working and will need to find the funding to turn on the second zone of service. He said they have discussed with the Administration other ways to enhance the COTA Plus service. He said they are evaluating if there is a way to expanding the COTA Plus service to the senior shuttle in a larger way. In that scenario, it would forgo a specific zone and expand the service all over Grove City. They will submit a proposal on this soon.

Ms. Houk said while this has been positive, it is not where they want it to be. Mr. Loges said they would like to be at 120 riders and they realize it is a bit of a high goal. He said a service like this takes a while to mature and we are only a few months into a year-long pilot. He said they will evaluate it at the end of that pilot year.

5. Mr. Boso said he and the Mayor appreciates the four (4) groups. He said for Fiscal Year 2019, the amount given to these groups is \$722,000.00. He said they look for that amount to grow in 2020. He said they are certainly ambassadors of Grove City and they look forward to expanding those collaborations.
6. After closing comments, a motion to adjourn was approved by unanimous consent.

Council adjourned at 7:33 p.m.


Tami K. Kelly, MMC
Clerk of Council


Steven R. Robinette
President