

**CITY OF CARLISLE COUNCIL – WORK SESSION MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, October 10, 2023**  
**CARLISLE COUNCIL CHAMBERS - CARLISLE, OHIO**

Mayor Winkler called the Carlisle, Ohio City Council Work Session of Tuesday, October 10, 2023, to order at 6:00 PM in the Council Chambers at the Carlisle City Hall building, 760 Central Avenue, Carlisle, Ohio with the following members in attendance:

***Council Attendees:***

Mr. Tim Humphries  
Mrs. Debbie Kemper  
Mr. Michael Kilpatrick  
Mr. Jason Faulkner

Mr. William Bicknell  
Mr. Chris Stivers  
Mr. Randy Winkler, Mayor

Staff members present:           City Manager, Chris Lohr

**Discussion Items:**

**Cost of Living Adjustment**

1. Mr. Lohr informed Council that Mr. Stivers would be 15 minutes late to the meeting.
- a. Mr. Lohr presented Council with the annual Cost of Living Adjustment packet. Included was an annual survey from Miami Valley Communications Council showing anticipated area jurisdictions non-union employees receiving for cost of living adjustments in 2024. The lowest adjustment is 2%, up to 5% in West Carrollton. The average cost of living adjustment is around 3%. Mrs. Kemper asked if there was knowledge of Warren County or Franklin's adjustment. Mr. Lohr did not have those numbers but would get the numbers before voting. Mr. Lohr wanted to get some numbers on inflation and what we have been looking at for the past couple of years. The monthly inflation numbers have settled down a little bit, this year and the latter half of this year, but they are still high. Mr. Lohr does not think it will be reasonable to match what inflation has done over these past couple of years and none of the other jurisdictions that they pulled were doing that either. Mr. Lohr thinks 3% is reasonable to keep us competitive and with what inflation is doing. Mr. Faulkner asked if that was what Mr. Lohr was already budgeting for. Mr. Lohr said yes. Mr. Kilpatrick said looking at part one, even 3% isn't going to get us anyone from the private sector, we are still going to lose to the private sector. Mr. Lohr said it's true. Mr. Kilpatrick said he doesn't know if we can afford to go more than 3%, but just looking here at the average for the last year it is 5.5%. Mr. Lohr said it has been bad. Mr. Lohr said one of the things he has kept in mind when we are budgeting, and we are planning on 3%, is we have had discussions about that 10% pension pick-up and we will have that discussion again. He thinks if we were to provide that to employees, even though we are not keeping up with what the actual inflation numbers were that we could offset buying power loss that everyone has experienced over the past couple of years so that is a consideration, as well. Mr. Faulkner said let me ask you a question about that. How would you feel as an employee if you got PERS picked up, well everyone has it, how many employees don't have it, he knows the cops don't have it? Mr. Lohr said he can tell position wise because he does not, off the top of his head, know the number. Police Officers, all the Patrol Officers do not have it. The clerk of courts, the Utility Clerk, Finance Clerk, Assistant to the City Manager/Council Clerk, Code Enforcement Officer. So basically, it is just the City Manager and Department Heads who get that right now. Mr. Faulkner said he is wondering how it would be received if you did one or the other instead of both in the same year. Mr. Lohr said he didn't know. Mr. Faulkner said it is kind of a raise. Mr. Lohr said it absolutely is, he thinks there are people who would certainly recognize that it is a big bump in their paycheck. We have a challenge being competitive with our Police Officers. For us to compete with the rest of the jurisdiction in Warren County. We maybe, really need to add the 10% pension pick up as well as adjusting cost of living. Those are just some thoughts he had about it. Mrs. Kemper asked they are in PERS now, right, the Clerk? Mr. Lohr answered yes, Police Officers are in Ohio Police and Fire. Everybody else is in PERS. Right now, we pay the 14% that's required of the employer and they're paying their own 10%. Mr. Kilpatrick asked if the average is 5.175% over the last year? Mr. Lohr says inflation-wise, yes. He wanted to present this information and prime the pumps with discussions we will be having moving forward with the Finance Committee and having to decide. Not only with what we do with the cost of living raise, but also the pension pick up.

Mr. Lohr asked if anyone had anything else on cost of living adjustment before we move on. Mr. Stivers asked what is the percentage we are talking about for Carlisle? Mr. Lohr said right now, he is budgeting for 3%. Quickly, the first page is the list of the Miami Valley Communications Council of what they are doing mostly in the Dayton area, what they are projecting for next year. The third page is information about what inflation has looked like the past three years. It does look like, at least in the last four months or so, it is starting to stabilize around 3%. He doesn't know if that will stick. That is something he had in mind as Kristina and him were putting together a draft budget. He decided at least for the draft to do 3%. The final page in the packet is because we had agreed to a 3% increase for the police union next year. There is that additional piece of supporting information that if we did a 3% for the non-union, we would be on par for our Police Union employees, as well.

### 10% Pension Pick-Up

- a. Mr. Lohr said just a quick update with the 10% pension pick-up discussion, that was talked about that previously and he wanted to get back to Council about it. We are having continuing issues with getting a Police Officer candidate to fill our open spot. At the same time, yesterday the Chief was informed another Police Officer is in a process with Beavercreek. That's not great news. He thinks that relates to the pension pick-up discussion in terms of competitiveness. I will compile some more information about who is providing that pension pick-up in the area. He knows we have talked about Franklin doing the 10% pension pickup and potentially Springboro. He just wants to make sure we are having that conversation, as we are putting the budget together for next year. Mr. Lohr thinks it is certainly worth considering so that we remain competitive.
- b. Mr. Lohr said we have been working on some updated financial forecasts. In general, they look pretty good. They are not quite ready to provide it to you tonight. In the general fund we are showing an increased fund block balance year over year through 2029. Obviously, that is positive, increasing fund balances there. The police fund is solvent until 27, or 28. Then we cross that 20% threshold. That is obviously not an idea, but that gives us five years financially to adjust and hopefully find some revenue to compensate for that. We are still working on our utility funds. It doesn't, at least at first glance, look like we have any long-term issues there. We have a very healthy balance in the sewer fund. We are trying to determine whether that money has been set aside for a purpose or we are just lucky enough to end up with that balance there. In general, the fund forecasts look good for the general fund and looking at the police fund it looks as good or better than some of the estimates that he bought, and Ryan brought in the past. Mr. Falkner asked Mr. Lohr while he is working on this can get a comparable on at least entry level pay rates for cops? Mr. Lohr said yes. Mayor Winkler asked which officer may be leaving. Mr. Lohr could not recall his name off the top of his head. Mr. Humphries asked if it would be too much to do an exit interview. Mr. Lohr said no, but we are not at that point, yet. He agreed it would be a good idea.

Mr. Bicknell asked to circle back because this is the second officer in a short amount of time, and he would like to know what is going on. He does not think it just is money, because the money has not changed drastically. Mr. Kilpatrick said other cities' money has gone up. Mr. Bicknell said a lot of Officers we have had have been here understand the situation and it is a whole community type thing. There must be something else. Mr. Humphries said the night that Franklin played Carlisle he stood with an Officer a half hour – forty minutes while he ran the remote and he is here because he is single, but he is engaged and getting married next year and that is an equation that is going to change in his life, so what he can do today with what he is getting he knows he is going to have to go to Franklin money, Springboro money because his wife and baby to be are going to require that. There are always different dynamics. Mayor Winkler said one of the things he has been told is that when we have run the police levees the community didn't support them. They do not feel supported and that's a comment that has been made toward him. Mr. Kilpatrick said the one levee we ran was not executed well. The thing is if they look at it, they are not going to stop getting a paycheck. They should see that we are looking at different ways to make this happen. He wanted to know if we plan to put more officers on overtime or plan to reduce staff because overtime is going to be costly. Mr. Lohr said Chief and he have had conversations about that and there is a potential to change the scheduling, maybe a twelve-hour shift instead of the ten we are on. Right now, we have some overlapping shifts, so we have more time now, but we have two Officers on shift and that is probably going to be reduced when we lose another Officer. Mayor Winkler said that is a long day, especially with a lot of

time off in between. Mr. Lohr agreed it was a long day. Mr. Bicknell asked if this potential Officer leaves, what does that take us down to? Four full time? Mr. Lohr answered that takes us down to five. Mr. Kilpatrick asked what our Reserve Officers do because he knows it will affect them also. Mr. Lohr said they will do some shifts occasionally, but from his understanding it is only for special events. Mr. Kilpatrick asked, coming for parades, coming for big games, that sort of thing? Mr. Lohr said yes. Mr. Stivers asked five plus Chief? Mr. Lohr said yes, five Officers and then Chief. Mr. Stivers said he is not expecting Chief to work full shifts. Mr. Lohr replied he knows he has spent some time out there, but I don't know that he is taking full shifts. Mayor Winkler said the Chief will go out during the daytime with an Officer if there needs to be a second Officer, but not full shifts.

Mr. Faulkner said he wonders what our health premiums compared to others. Mr. Lohr said that what we are paying here in Carlisle, compared to his last employer, is what comes out of your paycheck is higher and the quality of the plans is lower. Mr. Faulkner said you're paying the family rate here and you paid the family rate there, so it's more expensive for you here and it's not as good? Mr. Lohr answered yes. Just in general we are not too far off the market, but he knows there are better opportunities out there. Mrs. Kemper confirmed this is something we have been signed up to for a year. Mr. Lohr confirmed this. Mr. Humphries asked if HSAs are shoppable and if the same as everything else and up on the table? Mr. Lohr stated there are multiple options we can pursue to get better rates. We can change our broker or shop it out, which is common for Carlisle. Simply we would put in all our information, give the data to the insurance companies and they would come back and tell us what percentage they would cover us for. Mr. Lohr believed that has been done regularly. Beyond that, he thinks our biggest challenge for getting good health rates is our group size. For an insurer it only takes one person's serious claim, and it blows us off the charts compared to what they are bringing in for insurance premiums. Mr. Lohr is pursuing getting us into the Ohio Benefits Cooperative. He is currently having employees complete Formfire health questionnaires. They have until Sunday to complete those. Once we have those, we will give them to the broker for the OBC and they will send it to Jefferson Healthplan who will complete a risk assessment on us. The OBC board will take a vote on us at some point.

### Spousal Carve Out – Health Insurance

- a. Mr. Lohr explained that the City's policy for insurance includes spousal carve out. This means that if your spouse has insurance available to them, we make them take their own insurance. We will still cover your dependents, but the spouse must go with their insurance if they have it.
- b. Mr. Lohr did an informal poll for employees asking if we did not have spousal carve out would they bring their spouse on to the plan. Currently we have 16 in 2024 and there would be 4 likely changes. Mr. Faulkner asked what if we offered a waiver stipend. Would employees go to their spouse's insurance. Mr. Lohr agreed that was a good question and said he would ask that to employees. Mr. Faulkner said there are a lot of variables. Mrs. Kemper stated four was not a lot of people. Mr. Faulkner said he was talking about the other way. If your spouse has it, I will drop the City's and go with my spouse. Mr. Kilpatrick asked if we were allowed to do that. Mr. Faulkner said he gets a stipend from his employer for being on his wife's. Mrs. Kemper said that some do not, and they go to where you work first, then spouse second. Mr. Kilpatrick said that if it's going to cost us \$6,000 and we offer a stipend of \$2,000 or \$3,000, it would save us \$3,000. Mr. Lohr said there could be big cost savings. Mr. Bicknell said that he has been giving it a lot of thought and it has come up in conversation that he knows a couple paying 85% more in insurance because they must have separate insurance. He said it made him think we already have lower wages, is that really something we want to push on to the employees at that cost? Mr. Kilpatrick asked could we offer the "non carve outs" to bring their spouse over but offer a stipend to those who don't? Mr. Lohr said yes. Mr. Bicknell said he would hate to force an employee to pay thousands more because we do not allow their spouse to be on our insurance. He knows this is difficult because it is also a cost to us, but that is one thing regardless of how we are doing, we must do. Mr. Kilpatrick said his outlook on this is to get great people, work them well, and if we can offer a better package, we can get better people who stay and work harder. We can push them harder and get more out of them to get a better, cohesive team. The more we can do to attract that top talent he is for. He said this is counter intuitive to his fiscal conservativity, but for him it is getting the best people. Mr. Bicknell said in the position he is in, the ability to make more money comes

from his ability to work and make proper cuts, saving them more money. We can empower them to make things work more efficiently. Mayor Winkler said that is organizational management. Mr. Kilpatrick said so we talk to Department Heads and say we want to get you the best workers possible, what are five ways we can cut costs. Mrs. Kemper said as someone who worked in government all her life, she knows they don't pay top dollar, but they have good benefits. When you worked in a government office health insurance was great, although it has changed over the years. People who work in government already know that you get good benefits and that's what they look at. Mr. Kilpatrick asked Mr. Faulkner what Franklin did over there. Mr. Faulkner said that in 2008 they made an unpopular decision to go to an HSA. Mrs. Kemper said that health insurance will always rise. Even with rising health insurance, there were still good benefits. Mr. Faulkner said that you can make an HSA more attractive depending on the plan you set up.

- c. Mr. Lohr said the total cost to implement this would be a 28% increase. He said it is not a ton, when you look at the budget. It would be around \$78,000 for the change. Mr. Stivers asked if this was for four changes. Mr. Lohr confirmed this was for four changes. There is a big difference between employee only, employee plus dependents and adding the spouse to it. Mr. Faulkner asked what the family rate was. Mr. Lohr did not have that exact number with him. Mr. Lohr said wear paying around \$30,000 for a family plan. Mr. Faulkner asked what the employee share of the plan was. Mr. Lohr said it was 10%. Mr. Faulker asked for clarification about whether it was \$300 a pay or a month. Mr. Lohr explained the annual rate was \$30,000. Mrs. Kemper asked specifically what employees pay for each check. Mr. Lohr said it would depend on which plan the employee chooses. Mr. Kilpatrick questioned how employees afford that. Mr. Stivers asked if the \$30,000 is what Carlisle pays. Mr. Lohr confirmed yes, and the employees pay 10% of that. Ms. Kemper asked what health company we are with. Mr. Lohr said we are with Medical Mutual. Mayor Winkler asked if getting into the OBC would really help us. Mr. Lohr said yes, and that he prefers the OBC, but if it does not work out, that there are others out there. We need to get with a bigger group of people, so that we can negotiate rates. Mr. Kilpatrick said at that price we could afford to pay the employee a stipend to not take insurance. Mr. Faulkner said that is if their spouse has access to insurance, and they do not pay a penalty to take it. Mr. Kilpatrick said we could get more aggressive than that at \$30,000. He asked if insurance costs us \$30,000 and we offer them \$10,000, is there anything illegal about that? Mr. Lohr said no, we can offer a waiver and we can set the rate. His feelings are mixed about this, because if we get into the OBC, their rates are only single and family. There will not be a lot of savings because the employee and a child are a family, the same as an employee, spouse and multiple kids. The way our premiums are set up, it is beneficial to have the spousal carve out. He would like to provide that to employees, but it is a big cost to us. Mr. Lohr would like to continue to have this conversation as we move forward with the budget, and if we get accepted into the OBC, we will have to allow spouses. There are some options, like the stipend payment that he can look at.

#### **Finance Committee Reminder – October 17, 2023, 6PM**

1. Mr. Lohr placed a reminder for the Finance Committee Meeting next Tuesday at 6pm in Council Chambers.

Mr. Lohr asked to speak about utility aggregation. We have two issues on next month's ballot. Last week, Mr. Lohr put out some information that we have our own web page, now. Energy Alliance put together a webpage for us. Mr. Kilpatrick asked where the webpage was. Mrs. Kemper said you can go to our Facebook and click on it. She said there is a meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup>, that is listed on Facebook. Mr. Lohr confirmed the date and said it would be 6pm-7pm. It will be a presentation and then residents can ask questions. He plans to get more information out on the website, Facebook and the utility bills, if possible.

Mr. Kilpatrick asked what the next steps for the water system improvement. Mr. Lohr said we are waiting to hear back about our submitted Ohio Public Works application. He will follow up with Shelby to find out what we need to do while we wait. Mr. Kilpatrick asked if that application allows us to drill under the railroad. Mr. Lohr said it was discussed, but he is not sure if it will be incorporated into the project. Mr. Kilpatrick said it sounded like Casey's wanted to start. Mr. Lohr said they wanted to, but there was no interest and now they want to take down the building in November. Mr. Kilpatrick asked if there was a permit for demolition. Mr. Lohr said we would not need one, if we had a construction permit. He would not require that, but he will do some research on the planning commission case and see what valid permits we have. He knows they renewed a building permit, and their planning commission approval is until April.

They sent in a sign packet that needs reviewed and he isn't sure they have a valid permit for that. They also have some plans for water and sewer lateral.

Mayor Winkler asked if there was any update for Clerk of Council and Community Development. Mr. Lohr said he made an offer for Assistant to the City Manager and Clerk, and she has accepted. She plans to start next Monday. She is someone Mr. Lohr worked with previously, who has done most of the job's components and it seems to be a good fit. Her name is Elayna. Mr. Lohr said he made an offer to a Community Development candidate that he had to rescind because the background did not check out. He plans to discuss the position with the other candidate. Mr. Humphries asked what would disqualify a candidate in their background check. Mr. Lohr said there was a revoked driver's license, a suspended license, complicated court cases and a police report from the previous employer. Mr. Lohr said it was disappointing. Mr. Kilpatrick asked if these questions were asked in the interview. Mr. Lohr said that there were discussions, but it never came up.

Mrs. Kemper asked about the gas station with the drive-thru on the other side of the tracks. Mr. Lohr confirmed it was the one on the property we sold and that they were still working on the permit process. Mrs. Kemper asked if it was their permits that were delaying them. Mr. Lohr said yes, they still have some items to take care of.

Mr. Kilpatrick asked if they had a meeting about something coming across from us. Mr. Faulkner said the planning commission approved the preliminary plan. He said it is a banquet center/car repair. Mayor Winkler asked if this was the old building property by the underpass. Mr. Lohr confirmed this. Mr. Humphries said it was the most organized presentation he had ever seen. Mr. Lohr agreed with him, and he would check about sending the renderings out to Council. Mayor Winkler asked if they are currently operating a trucking company there. Mr. Lohr said he did not think so. As he understands, they are not operating on vehicles and those are their private vehicles. Mr. Lohr said it is an odd combination, but it sounds like they will be able to separate the uses. He thinks this will help with traffic on Central Avenue. Mr. Kilpatrick asked if we are going to allow vehicle egress onto Central. Mr. Lohr said Shelby Ingle is looking into that. There are concerns and we did request they do a traffic study because this is going to impact not only Central, but we are trying to put in a new traffic light down the street. Even if we are sending those semis up Union and around to the back of the site, then that is going to have an impact on our design minimally for the traffic light there. Mr. Kilpatrick said even with the banquet center, too, because a lot of those have a lot of cars. Mr. Lohr agreed and said that on Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings we are going to see a lot of cars in and out of there. Mr. Kilpatrick said that supposedly they will have a lot of Pakistani weddings and he would like to research on that if there are specific nights of the week. Mr. Bicknell said that usually they are multiple nights.

Mr. Bicknell said back to the property we sold behind the doctor's office; didn't we write a stipulation in that? Mr. Lohr said he had heard that. Mrs. Kemper said the end of last year. Mr. Bicknell said we are not far from that one year. Mr. Lohr said he signed the sale of property after he started here, and that was in June. If that is what we are looking at, he has until the middle of next year.

Mayor Winkler asked if we had heard anymore from the Dollar Tree. Mr. Lohr said they are still working on permits.

Mr. Kilpatrick asked back to what you asked about that one year, are you asking if we should pull it back? Mr. Bicknell said if they are not doing anything, then absolutely. Mrs. Kemper said they came in ready to go. Mr. Kilpatrick said because Casey's was not ready to go and they could get up in six months, then they would take it.

Mr. Bicknell said you had mentioned a company to come in and pre-build some industrial. Mr. Lohr said he had not heard anything from them. Last time he checked in the APEX, they had not heard back from them, either. Mr. Bicknell asked if he had anything new at all. Mr. Lohr said no, but he would check in with them. He has not spoken to them in a while. Mayor Winkler said there was a group who did that to start the industrial park years ago. They built buildings and did not finish the interior and sold them.

Mr. Stivers asked if there was an update on Dacraft. Mr. Lohr said he had a conversation today with Mr. Wax. He is looking to build the approved accessory structure from 2020. It has expired, but Mr. Lohr will get him the information to reapply for that. He said there needs to be a deadline to get these storage containers off the property. Mr. Bicknell asked if we have started a formal process because at this point, we need to issue citations. Mr. Lohr said he has not. Mr. Bicknell asked how long the containers have been there. Mr. Lohr said it has been a long time. Mr. Humphries said it has been many, many years. Mr. Lohr said last he heard they had gotten the engineers' stamp on the plans updated and he believes we have gotten those back. We should have been able to issue the permit. Mr. Humphries said anything they have going on is not easy. If they cannot build and do what you need to daily, getting rid of 50-60 tractor trailers is not on their list to do.

Mr. Stivers asked about the appliance store. Mr. Lohr said he was in court on Wednesday of last week. The judge gave him until the middle of November to make progress. Mr. Humphries asked if Mr. Fox, the magistrate, feels he is in compliance. Mr. Lohr said our Code Enforcement Officer, Mr. Kelly, said that he is agreeable in conversation. Mr. Humphries asked if he acknowledges that there is nine tons of metal outside of his building. Mayor Winkler said there are one hundred eighty appliances. Mr. Faulkner questioned how that happens. Mrs. Kemper said if it is part of the Dunn's, they had a place in Miamisburg that closed, and it was brought down. She said a lot happened during COVID.


Mr. Bicknell said Refresco has made a lot of improvements. They are a huge part of the junction motor we have been having. He asked if it would be beneficial to ask them to come in and ask them what their five-year forecast is because they have grown expeditiously, already. He said we had a meeting with them at their facility. Mr. Humphries said they had a five-year deal and five million dollars' worth of infrastructure. Mr. Bicknell said their business has grown and he would like to help, as City Officials, them to get to the next level. We are in the process of wanting to get away from this pump station and engaging them in it. He believes they are the second largest employer in the city. Mr. Humphries said they are the world's largest independent bottling company. Mr. Kilpatrick said he wanted to point out that we have other businesses in that business park, like Pure White Tail, and even though they look like a plain building, today they ship a thousand orders out. He said it is exciting to see that. Mr. Kilpatrick said also the RV place, in a nondescript building, ship over one hundred orders.

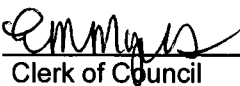
**Adjournment:**

With no further business, Council adjourned the meeting by voice vote.

Meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Date: 10/24/2023

  
Mayor

Attest:   
Clerk of Council