

VILLAGE OF OAKWOOD
WORK SESSION MINUTES
2024-1-23

ATTENDANCE

Erica Nikolic, President
Taunya Scruggs, Ward 1
Eloise Hardin, Ward 2
Paggie Matlock, Ward 3
Mary Davis, Ward 4
Candace Williams, Ward 5

ABSENT

Ed Hren, Village Engineer	Carlean Perez – Recreation Director
Ross Cirincione, Prosecutor	Gary V Gottschalk, Mayor
James Climer, Law Director	Tom Haba, Service Director
Dave Tapp, Fire Department	Mark Garratt, Police Department
Brian Thompson, Finance Director	Daniel Marinucci, Chief Bldg. Official
Johnnie Warren, President Pro-Tem	

Meeting opened at 9:47 by Nikolic

Nikolic: This is a work session to discuss proposed legislation:

2024-WS-01	AN EMERGENCY ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO A
Introduced 1-23-24	CONTRACT WITH CHAGRIN VALLEY ENGINEERING LTD. AND SETTING FOR
By Mayor and	THE COMPENSATION AND FUNCTIONS OF THE VILLAGE ENGINEER AND HIS
Council as a whole	FIRM
1 st read 1-23-24	

Nikolic: I'd like to open the floor to Council for any questions. You were provided the contract with the minutes last Friday. The floor is now open for any discussions or questions. **Williams:** Do we have a copy of the last contract to compare? That is what we typically do. **Nikolic:** I think on the contract it has existing rates from 2022 to 2023. You mean rates from another year? **Williams:** I mean the contract that we previously approved. **Nikolic:** For the purpose of looking at the rates? **Jones:** So, basically this letter that we included with it, summarizes the changes. There's a chart there that indicates the current rates for the current contract. The current contract looks almost identical to this one. There's a couple of changes which are noted in this letter. The rates are changing, they've gone up, roughly about 3 to 4% per year. Is what we're averaging for most of our categories. Again, trying to base to keep up with inflation, essentially. Then the other change in the contract is the retainer. Which currently right now is split between Ed and myself, with Ed as the Village Engineer, myself as the Assistant. We're splitting a total of \$36,000 for retainer. We're requesting \$38,000, and, the retainer will all go to me, and I would take over a Civil Engineer. Those are the two primary changes. Change in the rates for the for hourly billed items and then the retainer. The percentage structure that's in here is identical to the current contract. **Hardin:** Why has your clerical gone up by such a high percentage? **Jones:** Let

me take a look at that... It went from \$36 to \$40. You know, I think it was just really low. Again, an average of 2 to 4 percent, but a couple of them, there's a couple outliers. Clerical was probably the biggest outlier because that one was quite a bit low. Under what our expenses are for that. The other one that went up a little bit more is construction observer. And that's a cost that we typically are passing on to you. Because we typically use a staff consultant for that. And their fees to us have gone up. So that's really the reason for those two being a little higher than the others. **Hardin:** So, officially, are we going to deal with you versus... **Hren:** This is a program, honestly, I am again 62 very shortly. But, but I talked to the Mayor about our contract, probably about four years ago and introduced Matt as the Assistant Engineer. Matt has been working in Oakwood. He actually worked on the first Broadway reconstruction. **Jones:** Actually, the Forbes project was my first. I did the bike path design, and it was really my first job that I did start to finish. **Hren:** One of the things that we pride ourselves is smooth, seamless transitions. Which is very important to communities. I have institutional knowledge for sure, because I'm probably here longer than anybody except for Tom Haba. But, as of this year, I am no longer a partner at Chagrin Valley Engineering. I had like a five-year transition, where I sold my shares. But it is important to have a partner as a representative. This way the partner can make the instant decisions. Rather than me coming in here and saying, here's what I want to do. And you say, well, can you do this? I'd say, let me go back to the office. It's not a position that I want to be in. It's not a position that you want to be in. You need to really have the decision maker in charge. Now, I'm still going to be around for a while. I am an employee at Chargin Valley Engineering. And they never really support Matt. We have a lot of projects; I think I sent out that data sheet last fall. We have projects that we've already programed for the next five years. I don't know that I'm going to be there five years from now. But I will certainly be here in the next couple of years to offer support. Matt has already been working on most of these projects, it is just a smart transition. I think it is good for the Village. Matt's not a novice in this, we're not throwing somebody right out of college. He has been around for a while and that really is the reason for the change. It was a process that we're going through in all of our communities. In Maple Heights, we're doing the same thing. I'm still there this year. We have an assistant engineer in Woodmere. Woodmere really doesn't need an assistant, I think it's good to have a partner in the firm, representing you. And again, I will still be there to answer any questions for any of you. You all have my phone number, and you can call me. **Jones:** I plan lean heavily on this guy, especially in these first few months. Again, I have been working behind the scenes a lot for the last few years, particularly on more design, end of things. I do have a lot of experience in just being a municipal Engineer. I'm currently the city Engineer in Brunswick and I've been doing that for ten years. In addition to the fact, I've been working in Oakwood since the beginning of my career. So, I do have a lot of just general knowledge of a lot of these projects have been going on because I worked on a lot of them. But some of these finer points, there may be some times here in the first couple of months. Especially where maybe I don't remember exactly where one source of funding was for a job that was done two years ago. But he is still here, it will be very quick for me to be able to get that information. I'll be up to speed very quickly. **Hren:** And as you all know, it is not just me anyway. We have a big staff... **Jones:** Up to 60 employees now. We have a lot of resources that we can lean on. Other partners of mine are municipal engineers in other area communities. Which, you know, we cover about 20 of them. So, we have got a lot of resources. **Matlock:** Where do I sit on Tryon Road and Glenshire? **Hren:** For the resurfacing or the path. **Matlock:** We know the resurfacing is going to go from Richmond Road down to Jean Drive for 2024. **Hren:** Correct. **Matlock:** Then Jean Drive down to Broadway at a later date in 2025. **Hren:** Yeah, you just did the application for the other one. **Jones:** That's right, that's why, because I just did it. **Matlock:** Well, okay, so then we can discuss the walk path. **Hren:** We will continue to apply for funding for that. There's not a lot of funding out there. That particular path because of the terrain that's out there. Just a rough cost estimate, you're really talking, \$600,000 to \$700,000. Which is generally more than the cost of resurfacing the roadway. **Jones:** Yeah, it's tough because, again, the western half was built earlier. It was pretty straightforward; we had a lot of light open areas. Didn't have to do a whole lot of earthwork to make that happen. We had a few challenges with drainage and things, but it was pretty straightforward. The eastern half is hilly, and it is narrow, and it is going to be tricky. **Matlock:** Can we find any more funding for it? **Jones:** We can certainly keep looking. **Hren:** It is like anything else; we are always looking. **Matlock:** Because we do need Tryon Road

together. Before I do anything or any other areas, Tryon has to be fixed. Because we have a safety issue with Tryon Road. So, by all means necessary, it needs to be... **Hren:** Anytime there's funding that's available, we applied for it. Obviously, we're in position as a lot of times where it's not the project itself, but who else is asking for funds. That drives a lot of it, so, we'll continue to look. **Nikolic:** I'd like to respectfully request that we keep our questions directly related to the legislation. **Matlock:** No more questions. **Scruggs:** I do not know if this is a question for you or if it's a question for Mr. Thompson. I'm still trying to wrap my head around the budget. I notice in the contract it's stated that... so, basically salary, when you're working with the Village and having your assistant. Were there originally two salaries that were being paid? **Hren:** Yes. **Scruggs:** So, now we're actually not going to be paying as much once you're transitioned out? **Hren:** We are combining them and there's actually an increase I believe. **Jones:** We are proposing a \$2,000 increase in retainer. **Scruggs:** So, initially you two together we're \$36,000? **Hren:** Right. **Scruggs:** Okay, thank you. **Davis:** Did the Mayor talk to you about our budget for 2024, only being approved up to March? Because we didn't have all the budget information ahead of time. Did he mention that to you when you retired? **Hren:** No, he didn't, I had sent the budget information. Just estimates of SCMR, water, and sewer, back, just before Christmas. I know they were looking at it and they said if they have any questions. They would reach out to me on that. But we do that every year. We try to give a rough estimate of what we expect for the projects. We have a pretty good idea of what projects. And like anything else we try to reduce that. Because we're continuously looking for funds for that. So, but he has not said anything about it. **Davis:** I have a cell phone number for Mr. Hren, and we would need... **Jones:** I can give it to you right now. **Davis:** Okay, thank you, and Mr. Gustafson is he still working? **Jones:** He is still there. **Davis:** Okay, I just want to make sure, thank you. **William:** I know you've been here before. You know, I like to ask questions. **Jones:** Go for it. **Williams:** So, when I am voting yes, I know why I am voting, yes. There's no extra anything that needs to be clarified. So, we don't have the last contract to come here to. Did we pay before in the biweekly installments with the Pers? **Jones:** Yeah. **Hren:** If I can interrupt, as Matt mentioned. The only thing that we changed in that contract, is the naming of the Engineer. Which before it said, Ed Hren, the Village Engineer and Matt Jones is Assistant Engineer. Ed Hren would be paid \$24,000 and Matt would have been \$12,000. Now it just says Matt Jones, the percentages are all the same of construction. The way we have set up is, anytime there's grants involved. We basically are billing hourly rate. The reason for that is, we talked about this years ago. It becomes really difficult to say this is engineering and this is grant administration. So, the easiest way to do it is just to go to a raw hourly rate for those projects. So that hasn't changed and then the hourly rates for his employees. Has gone up like maybe anywhere from two and a half to 4%. With the exception of the clerical, more than the last two years. We haven't had an increase I think since our new contract in 2022. **Jones:** Yeah, those existing rates were in place for two years. You know, I'm not crying for Matt because he's a partner in the firm. But I mean inflation really hammered everybody in the last two years. I mean it was pretty reasonable. The same contract was offered and accepted in Woodmere as far as hourly rates and things like that. **Jones:** A couple of minor fixes, but it's almost exactly what we proposed to Woodmere. **Williams:** So, typically when there's a project, you all bill your fees according to these rates. Then it's charged within the project. **Hren:** Correct. **Williams:** As that's billed or whatever you need to do, right? **Hren:** Yeah, so typically what we'll do is every month we'll send the invoice in. So, like on this Forbes Road project, we will start working at it tomorrow. If I'm working at it for ten hours, next week I'll fill out my timesheet. Then, we'll send an invoice in February saying here's the dollars expended. We do it on each project. **Williams:** So, we were paying one retainer that you two split before. **Hren:** Right. **Williams:** And you're proposing to moving to one retainer for one person. **Hren:** Correct. **Williams:** So, what's the justification behind just increasing that amount. But now it's just one person? **Jones:** Well, I think it's again, just an inflationary thing basically. The idea before we were splitting the retainer tasks. Now I'm taking them all on. **Williams:** Okay. **Jones:** And again, the rate just the increase in the amount just to keep up the place essentially. **Williams:** So, this will be all on you now and you're just there for support? **Hren:** Yeah and so essentially it'd be like it was in like 2016. Where it was just me and I have a support team. Now, it's just Matt and probably 20 years from now. There'll be somebody sitting there, and Matt will be sitting here. **Davis:** So, we're doing \$38,000 plus \$108 per hour. Is that what it is, or is it \$108 and the most it would be is \$38,000? **Jones:** So,


they're really kind of separate things. Certain tasks on the contract are covered under the retainer. For example, us being here at this meeting. We don't charge for it; this is a part of the retainer. But if I'm actually doing some project related things. Like tomorrow if I'm putting together the RFP for the Forbes Road project. That's not covered under my retainer, that's a project-based thing. So, that'll be at the hourly rate. It just depends on what the task is. But there wouldn't be an overlap between the two. **Hardin:** When will you start to going through the Village for maintenance for the road repair? **Nikolic:** Can we restrict questions to the legislation. **Hardin:** No problem. **Nikolic:** Just so we can get through it because it's late. And unless it's a very pressing question. **Hardin:** No. **Nikolic:** We can save it for general meeting discussion. Any other questions or comments relating to the legislation. My last question is you don't foresee needing an assistant? **Jones:** Not at this time, no. I actually have an assistant now in Brunswick. A lot of my work over the last ten years. I spent about 80% of my time working on Brunswick projects and a lot of the rest of it here. Now that I have an assistant out there, she taking out a lot more of my day-to-day tasks. It will free up a lot more of my time to do this. So, no, at this time, I don't see a need for an assistant. **Hardin:** How large is the firm now? **Jones:** 64 people and we are aggressively looking to add to that. **Hardin:** You did a great job Ed. **Davis:** Yes we do, we appreciate you. **Hren:** Thanks, but it is great. I mean, honestly, this is our first account. Oakwood village was for Chagrin Valley Engineering. It's been great, obviously we moved here. But working with you guys, you know, I wasn't blowing smoke. It's always great to come before reasonable people present something to them. And, you know, and there are Councils, which I won't name. But it's three reads no matter what. I mean, somebody could be dying at your doorstep, and it is three readings. It hinders our ability to get the job done. It is a team effort and really, we appreciate it. We try to be honest brokers as you know. You ask question, we'll give you an honest answer. And it's been great, I've enjoyed it personally. And I know, Matt, he knows what it's like. I'm sure he'll enjoy it. **Nikolic:** Well, if there are no further questions or discussions. I will just encourage Council if anything comes up to send your questions to Matt. We will be putting this on the agenda at our next meeting. **Williams:** Before you adjourn, we had that totality of things we passed sometime in November with cost. You were going to get us the cost. What we were paying for other things. What needed to be paid in 2023, 2024, and 2025. You usually don't forget things. So, I was trying to be patient and waiting, and then we had this come up. But can you get us back? Because it is really helpful to know what's coming year to year. **Hren:** Absolutely, what I'll do is I'll send you the draft that I sent to, Brian and the Mayor for the budget. I will get that out to you tomorrow. **Williams:** Thank you. **Nikolic:** Any other matters deemed appropriate?

Nikolic: Can I get a motion to adjourn?

Motion to adjourn made by Hardin seconded by Davis
YES VOTE: Nikolic, Scruggs, Hardin, Matlock, Davis, Williams
MOTION PASSED
Adjourned at 10:15p.m.

Approved 3.26.2024


Tanya Joseph, Clerk of Council


Erica Nikolic, President of Council