

**CITY OF MASON  
COUNCIL MEETING  
MAY 11, 2020**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

The meeting was held via video conferencing using Zoom technology and broadcast live through ICRC feed. The public was able to access the live broadcast by logging on to the City's website or going directly to ICRC's website.

**ATTENDANCE**

The following members of Council were present: Diana K. Nelson, Ashley Chance, Tony Bradburn, Joshua Styrcula, Michael Gilb, T. J. Honerlaw, and Kathy Grossmann.

Vice Mayor Gilb opened the meeting in prayer.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion to approve the April 23 Special Council Meeting, April 25 Special Council Meeting, and April 27 Council Meeting minutes was made by Councilmember Nelson, seconded by Councilmember Styrcula. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

**CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

City of Mason offices will be closed on Monday, May 25 in honor of Memorial Day. Trash collection will not be affected by the closing.

As in years past, Mason's Veterans can enjoy a free round of golf at the Golf Center Memorial Day weekend, May 23-25. The American Legion will stream a virtual Memorial Day ceremony on Monday, May 25 at 12:00 p.m. Visit the City's website at [imaginemason.org](http://imaginemason.org) and follow the link to the live stream. This year in lieu of the traditional Memorial Day Parade the City is working with the American Legion, Mason City Schools, and the Mason Deerfield Chamber to promote community spirit and patriotic pride. Mason residents and businesses are encouraged to decorate their homes and storefronts with patriotic spirit. Mason's Veterans are then asked to explore City neighborhoods and send in pictures of decorated houses that exemplify the spirit of Memorial Day. Veterans who participate as well as the selected homes and businesses will be eligible to receive a Come Together Mason e-gift card.

A modified summer schedule with a single meeting a month for May, June, July, and August, as done in years past, allows more opportunities for committee meetings. A single meeting on the second Monday of those summer months should not pose a problem to legislation timeframes. A motion to modify the schedule with Council meetings on June 8, July 13, and August 10 was made by Councilmember Chance, seconded by Councilmember Bradburn. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

The City has continued to use the Come Together Mason e-gift card as a tool to encourage the community to support small businesses during the pandemic. A video tutorial was played to review the gift card program through a resident's, merchant's, and user's perspective. To date, a total value of \$13,000 has been redeemed through e-gift cards. Expiration dates were established to encourage a quick redemption and timely support of local businesses.

Mason's 2021 calendar photo contest ends Friday, May 29. Photos taken in the Mason City limits may be submitted, including an entry form, on [imaginemason.org](http://imaginemason.org). The cost of the calendar is supported by sponsorship ads from area merchants and service providers. Orders are now being accepted for ads in the 2021 calendar. Winners of the calendar photo contest will be announced this fall.

Incident Command's (IC) Phase 1 of the City employee return to work plan started on Monday, May 4. This brings the City back to a "critical" operational level. Public Safety and Public Utilities staff have maintained emergency staffing at pre-pandemic levels. Employees that are able to return to work in Phase 1 are working approximately 20-30 hours per week, catching up on the backlog of work that accumulated over the past several weeks. Departments are following CDC and ODH best practices to maintain a healthy work environment including social distancing, wearing face coverings, and limiting in-person interactions. Staff members who can work from home are continuing to do so. The IC Team is currently working to develop plans for Phase 2 of the employee return to work. The IC Team is working directly with Parks and Recreation staff to determine the best times to safely open recreation amenities. The IC Team and City Administration made the decision to announce that the Community Center is physically closed until June 8. The IC Team will reevaluate that decision by June 1 or if the Governor and ODH make an announcement that permits a change. City-owned fields will be closed to organized activity through June 15 and staff will reevaluate that decision by June 8 or if the Governor and ODH make an announcement that permits a change. Summer camps have been cancelled through June and will be evaluated on a monthly basis thereafter.

Council and Eric Hansen discussed Come Together Mason e-gift card transactions, dormant fees, expiration dates, and businesses that accept Master Card being able to participate.

### **RECOGNITION OF POLICE MEMORIAL WEEK – CAPTAIN PAUL LINDENSCHMIDT**

Eric Hansen introduced Captain Paul Lindenschmidt and stated he will be celebrating 40 years of service with the City this month. Paul said since 1962 National Police Week and Police Memorial Day has been celebrated. In 2019, 128 Federal, State, and Local law enforcement officers died in the line of duty in the United States and three of those were in the state of Ohio. Several formal events are typically planned throughout the county for National Police Week, but are canceled this year. A moment of silence was held in remembrance of those officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

**RESOLUTION 2020-2 FIRST READING: ADOPTING THE BUDGET OF THE CITY OF MASON FOR THE YEAR JANUARY 1, 2021 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2021**

A motion to read by title only was made by Councilmember Nelson, seconded by Councilmember Bradburn. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

Eric Hansen set a Public Hearing for Monday, June 8.

**ORDINANCE 2020-50 AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH TEC ENGINEERING, INC. FOR \$50,400 TO OPERATE AND MAINTAIN THE CITY'S TRAFFIC SIGNAL SYSTEM AND TO EXECUTE UP TO FOUR ANNUAL RENEWALS**

A motion to read by title only was made by Councilmember Bradburn, seconded by Councilmember Chance. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

Kurt Seiler provided a brief overview of growing traffic concerns and working with TEC Engineering to develop a scope of services and contract for the firm to provide traffic signal maintenance and operation services at a lower cost than adding a full-time traffic engineer. In 2011, based on the continued success of working with TEC, a five-year agreement was authorized by Council for 2012 thru 2016. In 2016, the City began the Citywide Fiber-Optic Signal Interconnect Project that took nearly three years to complete. The project involved signal system upgrades, significant improvements to the existing emergency pre-emption system as well as the installation of over 30 miles of fiber-optic cable that interconnects all traffic signals to a central based traffic management system. Since the end of the previous contract and throughout the fiber construction, TEC has continued to provide these services on a month to month basis at the 2016 rate. He said currently, there are 42 City traffic signals with a central based computer system and have connected four ODOT signals and two Warren County signals to the City's system. Thirty-six of the City's signals are at least 10 years old with the remaining six signals having been installed or replaced in the last 10 years. As the signals age, they begin to show intermittent problems that can be difficult to diagnose. The Fiber-Optic Signal Interconnect Project has provided the City the ability to better detect these issues before they become noticed by the public. Kurt stated staff delayed moving forward with a new contract to allow an evaluation of the efficiencies that may be gained from the new central based software and signal upgrades and then determine if the monthly fee could be reduced or maintained at the previous contract price. This proposal maintains the current 2016 monthly fee of \$4,200 for the first year and an option to renew up to four additional years with an increase of \$75 per month. With the efficiency gained from the new system, TEC was able to include a yearly corridor retiming project that will result in every signal being retimed over the 5-year contract. Retiming of signals is recommended every three to five years to account for changes in driving patterns and maintain efficient traffic flow. He said the cost is significantly less than the cost of a full-time traffic engineer and provides the advantage of having trained and knowledgeable staff that quickly responds to traffic signal issues.

A motion to suspend the rule and allow for adoption after the first reading was made by Councilmember Nelson, seconded by Councilmember Honerlaw. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

Councilmember Chance and Kurt discussed the US 42 and Tylersville Road traffic light and coordinating the flashing light with traffic safety studies.

Councilmember Bradburn and Kurt discussed the Citywide Fiber-Optic Signal Interconnect Project being a success.

A motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-50 was made by Councilmember Chance, seconded by Councilmember Nelson. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

**ORDINANCE 2020-51 TEMPORARILY AMENDING THE SEWER RATE FOR RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS AND AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ESTABLISH A UTILITY STIMULUS GIFT CARD PROGRAM AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY**

A motion to read by title only was made by Councilmember Nelson, seconded by Councilmember Chance. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

Eric Hansen discussed Ordinance 2020-51 and Ordinance 2020-52 together. The Business Resource and Recovery Team led by Michele Blair, Economic Development Director and Joe Reigelsperger, Finance Director, has been working to develop a multi-tiered recovery program that addresses the immediate needs of Mason's small businesses and strengthens the future resiliency of Mason's economic base. The first initiative, rolled out over four weeks ago, is the Come Together Mason e-gift card program. The program leveraged the City's relationship with Mason's small businesses to enhance Community Center membership benefits. The Team worked to enhance the City website, providing some interactive features, and regular updates specific to small businesses. Over the past month the Team developed a working concept of a Business Recovery Program. The Program concepts are intended to purposefully recognize that businesses are diverse, the process must not be complicated, and certain elements of the program have greater value with more immediate assistance. The program could also be scalable and allow for expansion as the recovery needs evolve among the various business sectors. Eric stated the Team recognizes that there are several proposed initiatives to support small business and proposes working collaboratively with those organizations (CDC, CIC, Warren County) to create a coordinated effort with a single application that would address the needs of all programs and reduce the redundancy and paperwork for small business. The Team acknowledges the need for a separate organization such as the CDC, CIC or other organization to serve as the administrative arm for programs that receive City funding. The Team recognized the CDC as an active conduit with well-established small business relationships necessary for the effective coordination of a gift card program and has worked to develop a service agreement with the CDC. He said the Economic Development Committee (EDC) recommended the development of a service agreement with the Mason Community Improvement Corporation (CIC) to be used as the administrative arm providing control and oversight necessary for both the Small Business Service and the Small Business Expense Forgivable Loan initiatives. The Sewer Service Credit and Gift Card Initiative provide relief in the form of a sewer bill waiver for businesses and residents through utility funds. All business and residents would receive a one month automatic sewer bill waiver equal to their current charges and those that provide identifying information would receive an additional \$50 Mason Come Together e-gift card. Ordinance 2020-51 authorizes moving forward with the Sewer Service Credit and Gift Card Initiative. Eric said

Ordinance 2020-52 authorizes a service agreement with the CIC and establishes the Small Business Service Agreement and the Small Business Expense Forgivable Loan initiatives. The Small Business Service Initiative is intended to provide immediate relief and is targeted to local store front small business with 50 employees or less. This initiative allows an opportunity to work with local businesses in developing a customized partnership that is supportive of their operations and beneficial to the City's mission. The maximum benefit would not exceed \$1,000 per applicant. The Small Business Expense Forgivable Loan Initiative program is to provide immediate relief for expenses directly related to a small business such as utilities, rent, or payroll while encouraging a step towards the long-term sustainability of the local business economy. The program would target customer-facing retail, store front and service industries with 50 employees or less and under \$1 million in payroll. The maximum benefit ranges from \$2,500 up to \$15,000 per applicant. The funding amount would be based on a formula grounded on payroll/withholding amounts. He said the Resource and Recovery Team continues to stay abreast of the changing Federal and State relief environment and continues to open dialogue with partners in order to understand how the City can play the best and most meaningful role in addressing the diversity of industries and get Mason back to work in a strong and sustainable way.

A motion to suspend the rule and allow for adoption after the first reading was made by Councilmember Nelson, seconded by Vice Mayor Gilb. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

A motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-51 was made by Vice Mayor Gilb, seconded by Councilmember Chance. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

Council discussed the overall funding impact to Mason small business being \$2.2 million, ensuring gift cards drive revenue back to Mason businesses, benefits and concerns of the utility program, possibility of utilizing a reimbursement of utilities through a tax credit, allocation of funds to assist economic recovery, even distribution of funds through small businesses, unused dollars from gift cards returning to the City, and planning for a second wave of pandemic economic shut down through an economic stimulus package through utility funds. Eric said the gift card program offers the ability to communicate to businesses the intent of the program following similar guidelines in Ordinance 2020-51 and geared towards small businesses most impacted by the shutdown. He stated utility funds have a fairly restricted use including a rate reduction program with Greater Cincinnati Water Works that would need planned now or an expense of authorizing gift cards.

A motion to amend Ordinance 2020-51 to add additional language to Section 5: An additional \$500,000 may be appropriated from the Sewer Utility Fund for a second round e-gift card program to eligible sewer customers upon submission of sufficient identifying information to be utilized if needed based upon further government shut-down or slow-down orders, to be determined by the City Manager was made by Vice Mayor Gilb, seconded by Councilmember Bradburn.

A motion to amend the motion to remove the stipulation of gift cards and add the following language to Section 5: An additional \$500,000 may be appropriated from the Sewer Utility Fund to be utilized if needed based upon further government shut-down or slow-down orders, to be

determined by the City Manager was made by Councilmember Nelson, seconded by Vice Mayor Gilb. VOTE: 4 YEAS, 3 NAYS (Gilb, Honerlaw, Grossmann). The motion passed to establish the amendment. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

Council and Eric discussed immediate relief, utility billing cycles, declaring an emergency versus implementing a rate reduction on the July bill to benefit the businesses that may be reopened, and utilizing partnerships to implement programs.

A motion to amend Ordinance 2020-51 for the sewer rate reduction to be implemented for the July billing month was made by Councilmember Nelson, seconded by Councilmember Bradburn. VOTE: 5 YEAS, 2 NAYS (Gilb, Honerlaw).

A motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-51 as amended was made by Councilmember Nelson, seconded by Councilmember Chance. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

A brief recess was held at 9:06 p.m.

The regular Council Meeting reconvened at 9:11 p.m.

Eric Hansen provided a Small Business Recovery Assistance overview including supply, demand, public and private partnerships, and recipients.

**ORDINANCE 2020-52 AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ESTABLISH BUSINESS RECOVERY PROGRAMS AND ENTER INTO SERVICE AGREEMENT(S) WITH THE MASON COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION IN A TOTAL AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$700,000 AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY**

A motion to read by title only was made by Councilmember Bradburn, seconded by Vice Mayor Gilb. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

Eric stated this program partners with CIC and service agreements depend upon applications from eligible businesses and follow a formula of \$1,000 per partnership. The loan amount provided is to be determined by payroll amount and will be forgiven contingent upon the business maintaining operations within the City of Mason either one or two years after the loan distribution date or to be repaid within six months after the end of the term without interest.

A motion to suspend the rule and allow for adoption after the first reading was made by Councilmember Nelson, seconded by Vice Mayor Gilb. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

Council discussed the two components of the program, payroll tiers, CIC collaboration efforts, incentivizing businesses to continue business in Mason, an immediate relief timeline, and program transparency.

A motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-52 was made by Councilmember Honerlaw, seconded by Councilmember Nelson. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

A motion to take Ordinance 2020-46 off tabled status was made by Councilmember Bradburn, seconded by Councilmember Nelson. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

**ORDINANCE 2020-46 AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ESTABLISH BUSINESS RECOVERY PROGRAMS, BACK-TO-WORK PROGRAMS AND ENTER INTO SERVICE AGREEMENTS IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$1,500,000 AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY**

Jeff Forbes said Ordinance 2020-46 may be considered moot since action has been taken on Ordinance 2020-51 and Ordinance 2020-52.

Council discussed amending the Ordinance to not vote against it since the Ordinance seeks to help businesses recover as well as dispense of Ordinance 2020-46 since Ordinance 2020-51 and Ordinance 2020-52 already assist local businesses.

Councilmember Styrcula and Jeff discussed amending the Ordinance, as proposed, would not give the City Manager any authority beyond fully implementing Ordinance 2020-51 and Ordinance 2020-52 and would not limit those Ordinances.

A motion to amend Ordinance 2020-46 to add language to Section 1: by fully implementing Ordinance 2020-51 and Ordinance 2020-52 was made by Vice Mayor Gilb, seconded by Councilmember Honerlaw. VOTE: 4 YEAS, 3 NAYS (Nelson, Chance, Styrcula).

Councilmember Chance and Jeff discussed Ordinance 2020-46, as initially introduced, did not authorize the City Manager to act on anything specifically and would have required further legislation. After Ordinance 2020-51 and Ordinance 2020-52 were adopted, it was not necessary to authorize Ordinance 2020-46. Adopting Ordinance 2020-46 as amended does not do anything additional than fully implementing Ordinance 2020-51 and Ordinance 2020-52.

The motion to adopt Ordinance 2020-46 as amended passed. VOTE: 4 YEAS, 3 NAYS (Nelson, Chance, Styrcula).

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

A motion to limit public input dialogue to five minutes per guest within a 60-minute time frame and no dialogue between Council members and guest was made by Councilmember Bradburn, seconded by Councilmember Styrcula. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

Thomas Dawson of 635 Reading Road appreciates the recovery programs being offered, but has concerns with the programs not being enough to help the small business community.

Randy Stegbauer of 5358 Hidden Creek Circle commended recent Council interaction and provided concerns with assistance seeming delayed.

Glen Garvin of 4974 Lava Court shared concerns of possible bias, coordinated efforts outside of public Council Meetings, and political posturing. He thanked City staff for providing creative ways to assist local businesses.

Courtney Tong of 4721 Country Downs Drive provided feedback on professionalism from Council. She said Mason City Schools shared on social media that May is National Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month and Twin Dragon offered hot meals and craft bags to families affected by the current economic hardships.

John Looker of 111 East Main Street said the Board of Veterans Affairs will be meeting soon to discuss applications and downtown veterans' flags. He said World War II veteran, Mr. Lloyd Thomas is celebrating his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and American Legion Post 194 and the family of Mr. Thomas will be celebrating with a drive by parade at West Mason Church of Christ Saturday, May 23 at approximately 10:30 a.m. Councilmember Chance and Councilmember Nelson will reach out to get additional cars involved for the parade.

### **OLD AND NEW BUSINESS**

Councilmember Nelson reviewed Senate Bill 310 which creates a mechanism to distribute \$1.2 billion in Federal financial aid to Ohio local governments below 500,000 in population and stated concerns with HB 49 centralized tax collection. She proposed a Small Business Economic Recovery Committee, independent of the City, to help with continued guidance and support and inviting business owners and residents to be involved.

Councilmember Chance and Councilmember Bradburn discussed sincere communication.

Councilmember Styrcula said the CDC Pay It Forward program first round of funding has been provided and businesses have already paid it forward. He apologized for other Council members' unprofessional communication that has offended the community.

Mayor Grossmann thanked staff and Committees for their research and ingenuity in creating the Business Recovery Program. She explained Councilmember Bradburn did not violate rules and directed a comment towards a party and not at people. She apologized for communication that may have offended the community.

Councilmember Bradburn volunteered to serve as the Council member on Mason's CIC. Mayor Grossmann advised the CIC is an independent body and she will make that recommendation.

### **ADJOURN**

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilmember Chance, seconded by Councilmember Nelson. VOTE: ALL YEAS. TIME: 10:36 p.m.