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City of Willoughby Hills

Working Committee of Council and Rules & Legislation

Minutes of May 20, 2025

The Working Committee of Council and Rules & Legislation was called to order on May 20, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. **Council President Kline** presided.

Call to Order 6:00 p.m. (0:03)

ROLL CALL (Audio: 0:17)

Members Present: Councilman Jarmuszkiewicz, Council President Michael Kline, Councilman Dan Knecht, Councilwoman Vicki Miller, Councilwoman Kathleen Sivo, and Council Vice President Tanya Taylor Draper, Councilwoman Belich

Also Present: Mayor Hallum, Law Director Michael C. Lucas, Finance Director Bruce Scott, City Engineer DiFranco, Police Chief Matthew Naegele, Road Superintendent Mark Grubiss, and Representatives from Bowen and Associates

Absent: Councilwoman Sivo

PRESENTATION OF FEASIBILITY STUDY OF POLICE DEPARTMENT AND

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SERVICE/ROADS DEPARTMENT BY BOWEN AND ASSOCIATES (Audio: 12:35-39:15)

- **Council President Kline:** The purpose of this evening’s meeting is to have Council hear the presentation by Bowen and Associates of the feasibility study related to the Police Department and the Road/Service Department. Before I turn the program over to Bowen and Associates, Chief Naegele asked for a few minutes. He would like to make a statement.
- **Police Chief Matthew Naegele:** (Audio: 1:28-7:05) Good evening. I appreciate you all making the time to come in here tonight for this meeting. I appreciate the continued support, and I appreciate you opening up your schedules to come in here tonight. Along with me from the Police Department, I also brought, as a member of my team that’s taken a very active role in the feasibility study and this process, Sergeant Shannon Vachet. He is sitting behind me and he’s here available for any questions in the event that any questions arise later. You could have some first-hand input from one of my department leaders. He has a lot of years of service here that could give you some valuable input.

- I stand before you not simply a chief of police but someone who's dedicated 26 years of service to the to this department in the community. Throughout those years of experience firsthand, our officers and staff have continuously adapted out of necessity to a building that I believe no longer serves our mission. Rather than having a facility that supports our operations, culture, and evolving responsibilities, we spent decades, forcing our operations to fit into a space that was never designed to accommodate the demands of modern law-enforcement.
- It's not only inefficient, but also not sustainable. For a little bit of background history, our current department was constructed in the early 1970's at a time where our department size, structure, and role in the community were dramatically different than they are today. There were far fewer officers, virtually no support staff, minimal technological infrastructure, and a little in the way of a professional development, training, administrative demands, or liabilities that we face today.
- While we have extended the life of this building well past its intended use through patchwork fixes, and what one of my most experienced supervisors described as a "cut and paste system," we've reached the point where continued piecemeal solutions are no longer viable. The foundation of our infrastructure can no longer support the weight of a 21st-century police force. Some current facility deficiencies...let me be clear, this is not about appearances. This is about safety, efficiency, professional standards, and community trust. A few of the critical issues include security risks and public confusion. Our police lobby is not distinguishable from City Hall's general access area creating both confusion and safety concerns. Arrestees are released into a shared space with no secure separation and no access to basic facilities like restrooms, which presents Americans with disabilities issues and liabilities along with it.
- Our current layout separates core divisions, patrol, investigations, and administration and support, across multiple levels physically and functionally. These teams must work in close collaboration to meet the demands of modern policing. Physical barriers hinder communication, reduce efficiency, and increase our operational risk. An example of that is that our patrol division, that sits down on one end of the basement of our police department exists while we have a jail upstairs on the other end of the police department, which is a significant liability in terms of required monitoring and responses when officers are in the jail with somebody and we have other officers that are downstairs.
- Community perception and accessibility: Our facility lacks basic public facing identifiers. There's no dedicated entrance to our department, a lobby, or even adequate signage. For a visitor or resident unfamiliar with the City, finding the Police Department can be a challenge. This undermines our image as a reliable, transparent, and accessible institution. As part of our planning process in collaboration with municipal design experts from Bowen, we've taken a thorough, data driven approach to analyze the facility needs. They will elaborate on the following: problem identification, staffing and administrative space analysis, training and meeting space planning, and long-term operational sustainability. We've also taken our community needs to harden this plan.
- The proposed renovation and expansion will ensure a clearly marked and professionally presented facility, safe and secure public entry and exit points, visitor friendly design and signage, accessible services, comfortable waiting areas, ADA federal compliance and best practice standards, and

designated and secure officer only areas.

- With the support of this Council and prior administrations, we've made targeted improvements like the HVAC upgrades that we did, and parking enhancements. As necessary as those upgrades were, they were still band-aids for a much larger issue. This is the time for long-term investment. This is an investment that I believe, and have the confidence of the Finance Director in agreement, that the Police Department can pay for the specific project through our Safety Forces Fund.
- I'm asking for you to trust in my leadership, my experience, and my vision. I'm not asking for extravagance, I am asking for sustainability. I am asking for a space that reflects our professionalism, promote safety, supports the of safety our staff, and serve our residents with the dignity and security they deserve. A properly designed police facility is not a luxury; it's a necessity. It's the foundation of an effective law-enforcement agency and a reflection of our community's values. I'm asking to partner with you and build a department that works with the building and not in spite of it, thank you for your consideration and time.
- **Road Superintendent Mark Grubiss:** (Audio: 7:06-12:21) I would like to thank you all for coming this evening. Our building that we currently have has been added onto two times. Our mechanic shop has been added onto once, which was the old Fire Department back in the 70's. We have outgrown our shop. The building is in very, very rough condition. In fact, the salt dome walls are currently falling in. Prior to me coming here, the back three bays of the salt dome were added on to support the wall from falling to the north. Now, it is affecting the inside of the wall, but during this past tornado, we really learned a lot about the building because when the roof blew off of it, the entire metal pan decking that sits on top of the bar joists has rotted out. They wanted \$120,000 to replace that section of roof. We decided not to do the roof right now because we knew we were looking at some type of plan of building possibly a new facility, if it works out. We have currently outgrown our facility by a lot. Our mechanics work in a very tight area; it's like working in a shed. He doesn't have the room and the floor is rough.
- Furthermore, the whole entire yard is a safety issue. As far as the public cutting through our facility, us leaving, machines moving around, etc. I am honestly surprised somebody hasn't gotten hurt or there has been some type of catastrophic thing back there. The police go through there, we go through there, and the public goes through there to get to the tennis courts and pickleball courts. This plan would eliminate any public from entering the service yard or cutting through the service yard. There are kids on bikes, and you really have to be careful back there. The building has been added on to twice and it is in very rough shape. I currently held off on the roof. The insurance company is going to pay us \$101,000 for not doing the roof because we are going to use the money towards a new building, so they were willing to do that. If I have to, for now, we can use that money to limp the roof along or whatever we need to do. We do have several structures out back where the roofs are caving in and the walls are rotted. They weren't really built on foundations; they're just pole barn type garages and they're well past their life. Like I said, we sat down with Bowen and the Chief and I discussed a lot of things, and you'll see that this evening, the whole grand plan of what they put together. You will see the Building Department is also in this building but that is open for discussion if that doesn't come to fruition either.
- This building is not going anywhere, but it is going to need some roofs, and a lot of attention. My

biggest goal is to build a facility that could house all our vehicles inside. Our equipment and any miscellaneous materials outside would be under a roof. Also, in a cold storage building which wouldn't have any heat. Because the EPA when we got audited...they frown upon any outdoor storage. Anything could leak oil on the ground, they want it on cement, and we just don't have everything. That is why we built the salt dome as big as we could, so we could house some salt, and in the summer, we utilize the salt dome for our storage because we can't keep everything in the garage as we keep switching seasons. That is where I am at right now, and I am open for questions.

– *Presentation of feasibility study of Police Department and Service/Roads Department by Bowen and Associates (Audio: 12:35-39:15)*

– **Councilman Jarmuskiewicz:** The way people come in for the pickleball courts, would it be more feasible to come off Chardon Road with the property we own? (Audio 39:15).

– **Ken Emling:** We did talk about that. At the time, the City Engineer had some concerns with building a road here and how much that might cost. That could be something that could be added in the future. Right now, we are focused on utilizing most of what we have and bringing them over there in the safest way we can. This could be an option down the road for sure.

– **Councilman Jarmuskiewicz:** Right now, they use the pavilion and the picnic area and the baseball fields and sometimes, there is a lot of people that park back in the service area there. That parking lot fills up between pickleball and picnics. Now, you are going to have cars parked all over on the driveways. What would be a solution to try and solve that?

– **Ken Emling:** We are expanding the parking here, and proposing a larger lot here. If we felt that this needed to be expanded or that this allowed for the expansion of the roadway, over to the north as well so that this could all be connected...if you did bring something off here and connected it this way, then maybe this drive isn't even needed, or it would just be for service just for plowing.

– *Ken Emling gave his remarks on the costs and numbers (Audio 40:43-45:17).*

– **Finance Director Scott:** Can you talk a little about the design cost as well.

– **Ken Emling:** Any architect or engineering team that you would hire, whether it be us, or another company...the rule of thumb is going to be around 8 percent of the construction cost for a design fee. A newer project, or a project from the ground up like the Service Department, could be a little less (that might be 7-8 percent). A detailed renovation project like the Police Department could be 9-10 percent. There is more work involved in renovating the building. If you used 8-9 percent, (or round up to 10 because that is easier)...if the project is at or around 27 million, for people who haven't worked with architects before, that sounds like a lot of money. It is a lot of money. However, we would be involved for probably 4 years, from when we start to when the ribbon is cut on this project. We would spend thousands of hours working on three phases of design before we get to the end of construction documents, helping you put the project out to bid, helping you select a contractor, and then being involved throughout the

entire construction process. Our fee gets used up over those 4 years. And like I said, if you were to put out an RFQ and hire somebody else in Bowen, you are going to see the same number. It is just the reality of what architectural engineering fees are.

- If you are looking for a total project cost, you are looking at about 30 million dollars. The good thing here is that I don't really think you have any other soft cost, you own all the land, you are going to handle the permitting, so there shouldn't be much cost there. The biggest soft cost is going to be your design fees.
- Thank you for having us. We appreciate it. We have really enjoyed working with these two departments.

PUBLIC PORTION: (Audio 48:00)

An opportunity for the public to address Council with any comments, issues, or concerns.

- Public Portion opened at 6:48 p.m.
 - No comments were made.
- Public Portion closed at 6:48 p.m.
- **Councilman Jarmuskiewicz:** What are the options for funding a project like this?
- **Finance Director Scott:** There are three options for funding a project like this. I have talked with Stifel, who is the firm that helped us with the salt dome and the fire truck. There are three general ways to do this. General obligation bonds, which are backed by property taxes and the full faith and credit of the City, is usually the cheapest form of debt. There is about a 90-day lead time and then it takes about 3 weeks after that for funding. There is a limit to how much we can borrow or issue which is based on our current assessed value with property taxes. It is 5 and a half percent of that. If we had no debt, we could go out for a little more than 22 million dollars, but we do have the existing salt dome and fire truck, so we are a little less than 21 million dollars available balance. This is option 1.
- Option 2 is revenue bonds. That is typically when a levy is passed, and the revenue bonds are tied to that new revenue stream.
- Option 3 is the most likely. This is called a certificate of participation. It is essentially a lease program the financing company would essentially pay for the building and then lease it back to us over a certain term. There is slightly more risk associated with that stream, so the interest rates are a bit higher. It is more complicated because there's more legal agreements, but the funding is actually quicker. It does not have that limitation as far as voter approval.
- Those are the options. I have some memorization schedules based on various scenarios which I can share offline.

ADJOURNMENT: (Audio 51:20)

- **Motion** made by **Councilwoman Belich**, seconded by **Councilwoman Miller** to adjourn the May 20, 2025, Working Committee of Council and Rules & Legislation.

Roll Call: AYES: Jarmuszkiewicz, Kline, Knecht, Miller, Taylor Draper, Belich
NAYS: None
Vote: 6/0

The meeting was adjourned the meeting at 6:51 p.m.

APPROVED: June 12, 2025
Date


Michael Kline
President of Council

ATTEST: Nick Aiello
Nicholas Aiello
Clerk of Council