

**Utilities Committee**

Wednesday, July 8, 2020

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1 The Meeting of the Utilities Committee was called to order at 7:13 p.m. on Wednesday, July 8,  
2 2020. It was noted that the meeting had been announced and a notice posted at City Hall.

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4 Roll call was taken, with the following members present: Ald. Jim Olson, Ald. Dan Stevens,  
5 Ald. Diane Wulf, Village of Holmen Trustee Brandon Cain, Village of West Salem Trustee  
6 Leroy Brown

7  
8 Also Present: City Administrator Eric Rindfleisch, Mayor Kim Smith, Financial Services  
9 Director/Treasurer Fred Buehler, City Attorney Amanda Jackson, Justin Running and Paul  
10 Woodward of Running, Inc.

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12 **Item 2 – Approval of minutes from the previous meeting**

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14 Motion by Ald. Stevens, second by Brandon, to approve the minutes from the previous meeting  
15 as printed and on file in the City Clerk’s Office.

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17 On voice vote, motion carried.

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19 **Item 3 – Public Input (limited to 3 minutes/individual)**

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21 Ald. Olson called three times for anyone wishing to provide public input and closed that portion  
22 of the meeting.

23  
24 **Consideration and possible action on the following items:**

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26 **Item 4 – MASS TRANSIT**

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28 A. Shared Ride Transit:

- 29  
30 1. Public Hearing: Approximately 7:00 p.m. (or immediately following Public  
31 Input) – Program of Projects Hearing for Onalaska-Holmen-West Salem

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33 Fred said the City of Onalaska, through the budget process, anticipated the expenditures and  
34 revenues and filed a grant with the State of Wisconsin. Fred said, “The State of Wisconsin looks  
35 at the allocation for our region for the State of Wisconsin, and then when the distribution of  
36 funds from the federal government as to how much Wisconsin is going to get, is broken into a  
37 various number of tiers.” Fred noted the city’s operating budget was \$871,926; its FTA 5307  
38 grant allotment totaled \$270,614; and State of Wisconsin funding totaled \$202,504.

39  
40 Fred noted that in 2019 the City of Onalaska applied for and was awarded STP Urban Funding  
41 for Shared Ride vehicles, which is an 80-20 split (80 percent payment by the federal government,  
42 20 percent local funding). Fred told committee members there is nearly a two-year delay

Reviewed 07/10/2020 by Fred Buehler

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43 between the time the figures are sent to the MPO in La Crosse County under the LAPC and then  
44 to the state STP Urban Funding. Fred said the price of the vehicles has increased nearly \$3,000  
45 per vehicle by the time the city receives its funding. Fred told committee members it is not  
46 possible to purchase six vehicles, but rather only five of the six vehicles the city was awarded,  
47 otherwise the city would be required to pay close to 60 percent rather than 20 percent. Fred told  
48 committee members the city will only be able to purchase two accessible minivans instead of  
49 three.

50

51 Ald. Olson called three times for anyone wishing to provide public input regarding the Program  
52 of Projects for Onalaska-Holmen-West Salem and closed the public hearing.

53

54 Motion by Ald. Stevens, second by Leroy, to accept the Program of Projects for Onalaska-  
55 Holmen-West Salem.

56

57 On voice vote, motion carried.

58

59 2. Financials (Justin Running or Paul Woodward/Fred Buehler)

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61 Paul reported the May 2020 statistics:

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- 63 • **West Salem Trips:** 229 (a decrease of 368 from May 2019)
- 64 • **Holmen Trips:** 405 (a decrease of 942 from May 2019)
- 65 • **Onalaska Trips:** 1,581 (a decrease of 1,201 from May 2019)
- 66 • **Total Trips:** 2,215 (a decrease of 2,511, or 53.13 percent, from May 2019)
- 67 • **MTU Passes:** 235 (a decrease of 409 from May 2019)
- 68 • **Agency Trips:** 446 (a decrease of 718 from May 2019)
- 69 • **Year-to-Date Trips:** 16,727 (a decrease of 6,480 from May 2019)
- 70 • **Revenue:** \$73,992 (a decrease of \$20,704, or 21.86 percent, from May 2019)

71

72 Motion by Ald. Wulf, second by Leroy, to accept the Shared Ride Transit Financials for May  
73 2020.

74

75 On voice vote, motion carried.

76

77 3. Federal Transit Authority (FTA) CARES Act grant for Onalaska Shared Ride  
78 Program

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80 Fred referred back to the Program of Projects and told committee members the City of Onalaska  
81 will receive \$202,504 for the operating grant. Fred said he had filed the grant with the federal  
82 government, which has accepted the grant.

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84 Fred said the Onalaska-Holmen-West Salem Shared Ride program has been awarded \$769,296  
85 via the FTA CARES Act grant as it relates to COVID-19. Fred told committee members he has  
86 submitted budget description items, and he said he had received tentative approval. Fred said  
87 once he receives approval via email from FTA, the City of Onalaska is eligible to purchase four  
88 Shared Ride minivans at a total cost of approximately \$160,000. The four minivans would  
89 contain protective shields to protect Shared Ride drivers. Fred noted the grant submission  
90 included:

91

- 92 • Shields for the current Shared Ride vehicles
- 93 • \$5,000 for Bluetooth
- 94 • \$10,000 for sanitizing equipment
- 95 • A \$4,000 loss per month for the last four months
- 96 • \$10,000 for tablets
- 97 • \$6,500 for hand sanitizer

98

99 Fred noted there was \$47,647 in “lost time,” and he said he needed to send FTA representatives  
100 the contract when the city went out for bids in 2016 for service from 2017 and moving forward  
101 for five years. Fred said FTA Region 5 Transportation Program Specialist Evan Gross was  
102 seeking language in the contract with Shared Ride related to administrative leave for contractors’  
103 transit employees. Fred told committee members Evan had told him Monday that the language is  
104 not included in the contract. However, Fred said the city receives significant assistance from the  
105 State of Wisconsin, which has “boiler-plated” Requests for Proposals for Shared Ride Transit.  
106 Fred said the number of hours of service Shared Ride operates in the City of Onalaska was  
107 included in the document. The draft RFP was sent to the State of Wisconsin and was approved.  
108 Fred noted there is no language in the document that addresses administrative leave, nor is there  
109 language to allow the contract modifications when both parties agree. Fred said Justin will not  
110 be eligible to be reimbursed for the \$47,647.

111

112 Fred addressed the CARES funding and said it began January 20, 2020 and runs through  
113 December 31, 2021. Fred said, “It’s like a list ongoing. If some more things come up, we would  
114 just add the additional projects. Once I get a green light to move forward, I’ll be sure to inform  
115 this committee of where we’re at. So far it’s in what they call the ‘Stage of FTA to approve,’  
116 and at this point we’re in a holding pattern.”

117

118 Ald. Stevens asked Fred if he knows what expenses are allowable through the CARES Act, and  
119 also if he knows what the process is to be reimbursed. Ald. Stevens asked if the city would  
120 receive a check, for example, for an item such as hand sanitizer after purchasing it, or if there is a  
121 lump sum from which the city may draw as expenses are incurred. Ald. Stevens also inquired  
122 about the delay between when the city incurs the expense and when the utilities/mass transit  
123 receives the money.

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125 Fred reminded Ald. Stevens the Program of Projects is an 80-20 split, and he noted the federal  
126 government pays 100 percent and there is no local share requirement. Fred said an item must be  
127 non-budgeted. Fred noted Justin is in charge of 32 transit properties and said Justin “has a very  
128 good handle of all of the things that could be eligible for the CARES allocation.” Fred told  
129 committee members Evan Gross assists him and said he believes the city is in a very good  
130 position to obtain the largest list of items for which it is eligible. Fred said, “It’s just a matter of  
131 them confirming these items I put on the list, and then we’d move forward. Once we move  
132 forward on the vehicles, for example, we would buy it off the state contract.” Fred said he may  
133 now submit a purchase order for the two vehicles now that the Program of Projects hearing is  
134 completed, and the vehicles are ordered to the state contract. Fred estimated that the process will  
135 take six to 10 months. Fred said the city then will be able to purchase four more vehicles once  
136 he receives FTA approval.

137  
138 Fred said, “Once I get these items approved, Justin will give me the information. We will go  
139 ahead and get them ordered. Obviously all the documentation will be here. The reimbursement  
140 is quick.” Fred said he will utilize an “echo draw,” a process in which he does a request via the  
141 Echo system and the city will receive the funds in two days.

142  
143 Ald. Stevens asked if there is a risk the city would be denied reimbursement for an item it  
144 submits.

145  
146 Fred told Ald. Stevens, “We should not have that issue occur at all because Evan Gross is our  
147 representative from the FTA. If Evan approves it, or disapproves like he has in reference to the  
148 reimbursement of ‘lost time,’ that is what I call our ‘referee.’ If he accepts it, it’s a done deal.  
149 We just have to follow the proper protocol. The key thing is it is very critical that we follow  
150 FTA rules and regulations.” Fred said the vehicles must be purchased under the state contract,  
151 and he noted that purchasing items via the state contract means that all FTA guidelines have been  
152 followed and complied with. Fred added, “The city is at no risk when we buy it under the state  
153 contract.”

154  
155 Justin said Shared Ride communicates either with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation  
156 or Fred, who then communicates with Evan and asks if something is an allowable expense,  
157 before proceeding with recommending a purchase. Justin noted there recently was FTA  
158 guidance given out by WisDOT stating that the “lost time” would be covered. However, some of  
159 the guidance was changed based on Shared Ride’s questions. Justin assured Ald. Stevens that  
160 Shared Ride will not recommend any spending until either WisDOT or FTA states an expense is  
161 allowable.

162  
163 Fred told committee members that Evan is working with FTA’s law firm in reference to the  
164 federal registry. Fred noted that each transportation in the United States had received two to  
165 three times the allocation for CARES funding based on their size.

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167 B. MTU:

- 168 1. Transit Financials 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter information (Adam Lorentz)  
169 2. Practices/Procedures since COVID-19 for the MTU program  
170

171 Fred noted he has not heard from Adam recently and said he will reach out to him.  
172

173 C. Holmen Transit Input (Holmen Rep.)  
174

175 No report.  
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177 D. West Salem Transit Input (West Salem Rep.)  
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179 No report.  
180

181 E. Onalaska Transit Input (Onalaska Rep.)  
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183 No report.  
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185 **Item 5 – UTILITIES**  
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187 No Report  
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189 **Adjournment**  
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191 Motion by Ald. Olson, second by Ald. Wulf, to adjourn at 7:41 p.m.  
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193 On voice vote, motion carried.  
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196 Recorded by:  
197

198 Kirk Bey