

CITY OF COOPERSVILLE
REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY OF COOPERSVILLE CITY COUNCIL
CITY HALL, 289 DANFORTH ST.; COOPERSVILLE, MICHIGAN

March 10, 2025

Present: Council Member Bowman Council Member Poelma
Council Member Gavin Council Member Weise
Council Member Gerard Mayor Bush

Absent: Council Member Degeus

Motion by Council Member Weise with second by Council Member Bowman to excuse the absence of Council Member Degeus. Motion carried unanimously. (2025 – 022)

Additions/Corrections to Agenda NONE

Scheduled Guests & Public Hearings

Veronica LaBar of the Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS)

Veronica LaBar of MERS presented a power point of the city's current retirement plan, the plan options that are available, and addressed the Council's concerns on the sustainability of the plan if it is not modified for future hires.

The current plan and three following scenarios were presented for Council to consider:

- ***Baseline:*** The current MERS retirement plan is a Defined Benefit Plan Division 01, which provides a 2.0% multiplier (no max), 5-year FAC, 6-year Vesting Period, early unreduced retirement at age 55 w/25 years of service, SLIF 480 hours max at 25% Employees contribute 4%.. The City's normal cost for the current plan is 8.0%.
- ***Scenario 1:*** Current staff will remain in the baseline DB Plan. New hires will be enrolled in a new DB Plan with 1.50% multiplier (no max), with a 10-year Vesting Period, no early unreduced retirement options, 4%-member contribution rate, SLIF 120 hours max at 25%. The projected employer normal cost for this scenario is 3.26%.
- ***Scenario 2:*** The same as Scenario 1 except with a 1.75% multiplier (no max) in the new DB Plan. The projected employer normal cost for this scenario is 4.36%.
- ***Scenario 3:*** Current staff will remain in the baseline DB Plan. New hires will be enrolled in a Defined Contribution Plan with an assumed 10% employer contribution, plus an additional employer match of (up to 5%) of employee contributions to the 457 Program. The projected employer cost for this scenario is 15% (assuming maximum participation by employees)

Council Member Gerard inquired as to how many of the 224 municipalities were funded at or under the seventy-one (71) percent in 2022.

Council Member Weise asked if it would be realistic to reach the fifteen (15) year assumption to get equaled out.

Ms. LaBar explained they evaluate the plans yearly and compare them to the changes of what actually happened. Changes to the assumptions are made due to the changes in the volatility market, etc.

Scheduled Guests & Public Hearings continued

Nate Ver Heul of Prein & Newhof to Provide Southeast Regional Force Main Updates

Nate Ver Heul of Prein & Newhof presented an update on the SERFM construction project, and the need for further upgrades to the Main Lift Station that would not be covered by the grant funding for the project.

Nate Ver Heul recommended the city take full advantage of additional upgrades to the Main Lift Station during the SERFM construction project. There are some significant benefits for the city to complete the full scope of the Main Lift Station improvements, as listed below:

At current estimates, 50% of the project cost will be covered by grant funding.

- It takes advantage of the paid engineering costs.
- It minimizes the risk associated with bypass pumping.
- It takes advantage of contractor mobilization.
- It puts all the assets at the station on the same timeline related to asset management.
- The cost of the improvements will become more expensive in the future.

The construction cost of the Main Lift Station improvements (not including engineering fees), are compared to the allocated grant amount below:

<i>Grand River Construction Bid</i>	<i>\$2,273,500</i>
<i>Muskegon County Grant</i>	<i>\$1,164,000 (51%)</i>
 <i>City of Coopersville Share</i>	 <i>\$1,109,500 (49%)</i>
<i>Contingency (10%)</i>	<u><i>\$111,000</i></u>
<i>City of Coopersville Total</i>	<i>\$1,220,500</i>

The Main Lift Stations retrofit will include larger pumps, valves, all piping, site force main and bypass connection, meter chamber, electrical, controls, instrumentation, and a generator. The additional Main Lift Station capacity will have the ability to handle extreme flows.

The construction improvements projected final completion dates for the project are August 1, 2026, and September 1, 2026.

Citizens Input and Suggestions

Duane Young, Resident, commented on the following:

Changes to the city Pension Plan is not necessary as the wages are low and the city does not even give cost of living wage increases.

Thanked Council Members Wesie, Gavin, Gerard, and Bowman for meeting with him.

Some things that are posted on social media are too vague.

The city puts businesses against residents.

Master Plan update should have been done two (2) years ago, and the Assistant City Manager should have to explain why it was not completed and he should be held accountable.

The city grants IFT's (Industrial Facility Tax Exemptions) but now cut pension plan.

The city cannot provide additional sidewalks because of the IFT's that were granted.

Amanda Bowman, Resident, offered ideas for the city to better communicate with residents and businesses.

Ms. Bowman stated that the meeting agendas are too vague. People read about agenda items in the paper after the meetings are over. She learned that the city purchased water meters awhile back, but learned later that the meters were "smart meters," and residents could not opt out of the new smart meters. More detailed information needs to be on the agenda, provide residents with Council Packets by using an email service, "Live" stream the meetings, and place additional public postings throughout the city.

Citizens Input and Suggestions continued

Seffron Oster, Resident, expressed his appreciation to the Council Members for responding to them on his questions on the Brownfield TIF. Pension Plan and Master Plan information should be shared with the public. Anything we add to the city does cost money and maintaining the additions is required.

Mike Hammond, Resident, stated that he has installed over five hundred (five hundred) meters while working for the city and he is proud of his accomplishments. Mr. Hammond stated further that the replacement of the meters has saved the city a substantial amount of money.

Consent Agenda

Motion by Council Member Gerard with second by Council Member Gavin to approve the Consent Agenda which consists of the following: Motion carried unanimously. (2025 023)

- ***Minutes of the City Council Meeting of February 10, 2025***
- ***Minutes of the City Council Closed Meeting on February 10, 2025***
- ***Checks through March 10, 2025, Totaling \$3,304,066.15***
- ***Council Information Packet***

Petitions and Communications

Discussion – Municipal Employees’ Retirement System (MERS)

Discussion was held on the proposed changes to the Municipal Employees’ Retirement System (MERS).

Council Member Weise asked where we stand compared to other municipalities that have MERS.

City Manager, Dennis Luce, stated that when the Ottawa County Sheriffs Department went from the Defined Benefit System to the Defined Benefit Contribution System the county lost employees.

Council Member Weise asked how we got to where we currently stand as far as the percentage of being fully funded. Veronica LaBar of MERS stated that changes in the market play a major role in this.

City Manager Dennis Luce asked if we only changed the number of years to be fully invested from six (6) years to ten (10) years would it be effective. Veronica LaBar of MERS stated that they would have to have a certified evaluation performed to determine if it would make a difference or not. MERS outsources the evaluations and there would be a cost to the city to have the evaluation completed.

Veronica LaBar stated that once the plan is changed and the multiplier is lowered the fund would have to be funded at eighty (80) percent to raise the multiplier back up.

Council Member Gerard stated that we should get rid of the pensions and go strictly to the “Defined Benefit Contribution” plan.

Council Member Weise asked if employees could contribute more to the Defined Benefit Program if they so wish to.

Treasurer, Keri Rogers stated that “no” they cannot as the city also has a “457 plan” that employees can contribute to in addition to the MERS plan.

Council Member Gavin stated that “Defined Benefits” plans are good, but “Defined Benefit Contributions” plans may work better for others that may change jobs frequently. Council Member Gavin suggested changing the number of years to be vested from the current six (6) years to ten (10) years, which in turn may retain employees longer.

Council Member Weise asked if people want to stay here. City Manager Dennis Luce stated “yes” they do.

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Petitions and Communications continued

Discussion – Municipal Employees’ Retirement System (MERS)

Council Member Gavin suggested having a workshop or discussing the options further during the upcoming “Budget Workshop.”

Council Member Gerard asked if contributions to the plan comes out of each department that employees work in. Treasurer, Keri Rogers stated “yes.”

Council Member Weise asked if “Scenario/Option 3” would be the best option for reaching the “fully funded” status. Veronica LaBar of MERS stated that a “surplus division can be accomplished. It reduces the contributions but can bring the funding amount up.

Council Member Gerard suggested keeping our current plan for current employees and to eliminate the pension plan for new hires.

Council Member Weise stated that we need to fix our current funding.

Discussion/Action -Upgrades to the Main Lift Station

Motion by Council Member Gerard with second by Council Member Gavin to approve “Option #3” additional upgrades to the Main Lift Station, which will include larger pumps, valves, all piping, site force main and bypass connection, meter chamber, electrical, controls, instrumentation, and a generator. The additional Main Lift Station capacity will have the ability to handle extreme flows. Upgrades will be performed by Grand River Construction, totaling \$1,220,500.00. Completion dates will be August 1, 2026, and September 1, 2026, respectively. Motion carried unanimously. (2025 – 024)

Discussion/Action – Enhancing City Communication and Social Media Policies

Motion by Council Member Bowman with second by Council Member Gavin to approve the Policies as presented which will be for all City Social Media Sites including Recreation and DDA Departments. Motion carried unanimously. (2025 – 025)

Discussion/Action – Resolution of Commitment and Support for the Local Bridge Program (LBP)

Motion by Council Member Weise with second by Council Member Poelma to approve the submittal of a new application for the Main Street Bridge with approval to offer a city match of fifteen (15) percent. Motion carried unanimously. (2025 – 026)

Discussion/Action – Proposed Pay Increase for Election Inspectors

Motion by Council Member Gerard with second by Council Member Weise to approve the following proposed pay increases for Election Inspectors: Motion carried unanimously. (2025 – 027)

Position	Current Pay Rate	Proposed Pay Rate
Chairperson	\$18.00 per hour (with an additional \$25.00 for responsibility of the precinct)	\$22.00 per hour (with an additional \$35.00 for the responsibility of the precinct)
Co-Chairperson	\$18.00 per hour	\$22.00 per hour
Election Inspector	\$16.00 per hour	\$20.00 per hour
Receiving Board	\$40.00 for 1 st Precinct and \$25.00 for each additional Precinct	\$100.00 for Election Night
Certification Training	\$25.00	\$35.00 for in person and \$30.00 for on-line (if necessary)

Petitions and Communications continued

Discussion/Action – Ottawa County BEAD Grant Letter of Support

Motion by Council Member Weise with second by Council Member Gavin to approve the BEAD Letter of Support. Motion carried with Mayor Bush Opposing. (2025 – 028)

Citizen Input and Suggestions

Duane Young, Resident expressed his frustration with the Master Plan and read proposed Ordinance Amendment numbers that were proposed by HOM Flats dating back to 2021.

Seffron Oster, Resident stated that things need to change over time, and it would be great to get the meeting packets by subscribing to city information.

City Manager, Dennis Luce reported on the following:

- *Master Plan Post Cards will be mailed out this week and the Master Plan Survey will be up and available for four (4) weeks.*

City Clerk's Report

City Clerk, Kimberly Borgman reminded the Council that there will be a May 6, 2025, School Election, and she also thanked the Council and Mayor for their support on the proposed pay increases for the Election Inspectors.

City Treasurer's Report NONE

Mayor Bush's Comment

Mayor Bush stated that he is no longer participating in any social media sites.

Adjournment

Motion by Council Member Weise with second by Council Member Gerard to adjourn the meeting at 8:59 P.M. Motion carried unanimously. (2025 - 029)

Kenneth Bush, Mayor

Kimberly Borgman, City Clerk