City of Jonesboro

Meeting Minutes

Finance & Administration Council Committee

Tuesday, January 30, 2024   **4:00 PM**   **Municipal Center, 300 S. Church**

---

1.   CALL TO ORDER

2.   ROLL CALL (ELECTRONIC ATTENDANCE) CONFIRMED BY CITY CLERK APRIL LEGGETT

Present 5 - Joe Hafner;Charles Coleman;David McClain;Brian Emison and Anthony Coleman

Absent 2 - Ann Williams and John Street

ELECTION OF A CHAIR

A motion was made by Brian Emison, seconded by Charles Coleman, that Joe Hafner be nominated as Chair of the Finance Committee. All voted aye.

3.   APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MIN-23:125   MINUTES FOR THE FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETING ON DECEMBER 28, 2023

Attachments: FA Minutes 12282023

A motion was made by Brian Emison, seconded by David McClain, that this matter be Passed . The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 4 - Charles Coleman;David McClain;Brian Emison and Anthony Coleman

Absent: 2 - Ann Williams and John Street

4.   NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTIONS TO BE INTRODUCED

RES-24:003   A RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE WILLINGNESS OF THE CITY OF JONESBORO, ARKANSAS TO AUTHORIZE THE GRANTS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT TO APPLY FOR THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (USDOT), FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA), FY2021 49 U.S.C. SECTION 5339 FORMULA GRANT, FOR THE JONESBORO ECONOMICAL TRANSIT SYSTEM (JET)

Sponsors: Grants, Community Development, Finance and JETS

Attachments: NovusDR-Paratransit-Demand-Response-Software-Compilation-TripSpark- J

Councilmember David McClain said, I was just curious. What is the real-time route management and communication software? Do we have it now, or is something we are looking to implement? And how does it work?

Interim Director of JETS Lee Wells approached the podium and said, so we do currently have real-time route managing software. What we are using is an old, antiquated system that is provided by this same vendor. It has very little as far as what it does other than us to be able to program trips for the next day. With us doing this, we are actually upgrading their software to a newer model that is going to allow for an ease of use that will allow us to hopefully be able to bring in other components that they offer to be able to upgrade our system. One of the things that this is going to allow us to do is to actually send out notifications to our customers as they are riding for our paratransit to let them know and confirm their trips for the next day, and then also to make them aware of when their vehicle will actually be arriving so they can be prepared to be able to board the vehicle. This is going to give us an ease of use to be able to schedule our customers for the trips that they are wanting, and to be able to get it all integrated together without interfering with other trips. Whereas, right now it takes two people pretty much all day anytime we have to move a trip to be able to navigate that system and manually move every trip to every vehicle in order to do this. This is an automated system; but more importantly, by upgrading to this, this is going to give us room for expansion. For example, in getting a full-fledged app for the service that can also be utilized for our fixed route to allow us to be able to get into some more of the technology based stuff that a lot of the other transit systems are using. Because of our system that we have now, it's not really something that we can do. Think of this as like, we are using old Windows 5, and this is going to allow us to get to the newer programs that are going to allow us to get additional items to allow us to work easier, and then also to be able to better service our customers as they ride our routes.

Chairman Joe Hafner said, so right now under like our current system, like on the fixed routes, can you look at a board or look at your phone and see where all the buses are? Mr. Wells said, we have a system in place that was actually developed by, I believe, a combination of students in the I.T. Department at Arkansas State University that basically takes the data from this company and shows the location; but there is no one currently at Arkansas State to update or maintain that. It was enacted and built and then dropped out there on the web for people to use. Chairman Joe Hafner said, but this system would be able to update all of that. Mr. Wells said, correct. Chairman Joe Hafner said, and you still would be able to see the buses without relying on the ASU technology. Mr. Wells said, exactly, and you know, just as an example, once they do get those systems in place, they would not only be able to see what route they are going to be getting on in their area, but they can also see a destination of when that will arrive. And in high traffic areas where there may be our multiple stops, they will be able to look and see, 'okay, I can go to this stop and wait five minutes or I can go to this stop and wait 20 minutes' in order to better navigate that system. Chairman Joe Hafner said, and they being the customer, right? Mr. Wells said, correct. The rider. Yes, sir. Chairman Joe Hafner said, so it would be more customer friendly, and I would think it is more management friendly too, because you look at the board or whatever or the app and see, okay, is this bus behind schedule or are they ahead of schedule, or are they stuck in traffic or what is going on, right? Mr. Wells said, correct. 100%. Also allowing better reporting as far as for us to be able to pull data and information on that to use for the various requirements that we have.

Councilmember Dr. Charles Coleman said, do those buses have cameras on them? Mr. Wells said, all of our vehicles have cameras on them now, yes sir. Councilmember Dr. Charles Coleman said, are they one way cameras in the back and the front? Mr. Wells said, so our big buses are fixed route buses. They have three internal cameras, and they all face inside. There are none that are on the windshield facing out. As we have new buses that come in, that is something that we are adding to that, so we can see ahead of the vehicle to be able to better identify. Councilmember Dr. Charles Coleman said, you can see from your office? Mr. Wells said, we have to pull that data after the fact. It's like a black box. We would pull that data, download it onto the computer, and be able to view it. Councilmember Dr. Charles Coleman said, I guess the question that I really have is, if there is an accident, how long would it take for you to know there had been an accident on that bus? Mr. Wells said, honestly, it kind of depends on the variables. If there is an accident on the bus, all of our drivers have radios that go immediately to dispatch to be able to notify any incident. As far as pulling video, it would require us to get to the vehicle, pull the cartridge out, take it to the office, and hook it up to the computers. But the notification system is just simply for the driver to inform us and let us know. Councilmember Dr. Charles Coleman said, I think you might want to ask about that. To me, that is too much of a delay, especially if there is a handicap issue, where you can actually see. It's kind of like a house where you can actually see right then and after if there is an accident. Mr. Wells said, yes sir. It is not something like this. This is a completely different type of programming; but that is something that we are looking at as we get new vehicles in, is looking at the camera system that we have and trying to find the best fit for the needs that we have. And, you know, real time data transfer is an option that is out there, and it is something that we are looking at and evaluating to see cost to need, to make sure it is something that we can do in the best interest of everybody.

Chairman Joe Hafner said, just to add on to what Dr. Coleman was talking about, a company that I am involved in, we have garbage trucks, and we use a company called Lytx. They are drive cams. But basically all of our trucks have these drive cams in them; and number one, it does have real time notification, like if there is a hard brake or things like that, then the manager gets a notification and they can look into what is going on. But the other thing that it has done, when there have been accidents, not only are the managers notified or whoever is in the distribution list, but the thing is done for us is, it helps get us out of tickets and stuff for people. Because it clearly shows who caused the accident. So I can give you or Brian some information if you want to reach out to somebody that deals with them every day and look into them further. But I think it is something good to have; because obviously our drivers all have CDLs and a lot of training and stuff, but if there is a way to make them safer on the roads. It's kind of like a Big Brother thing, but it's not a Big Brother thing if you're doing the right thing.

Mr. Wells said, and that is one of the things, again, to talk about this software, this specific thing. By upgrading and doing this, they have a lot of integration that is capable through various vendors. The routing software is an item unto itself. The camera system is a separate item. But by upgrading to this, that allows us to look at even more possibility of doing an integrated system. I know we can see currently now where the vehicles are. With this newer software, it will allow us to get a better definition of where they are, how fast they are going, and things like that in a more accurate real time example.

Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, good job, so my question is more on the financial side of the request here. It says that there was an allocation of the same

amount in '21 plus another three additional years. And then with this upgrade, my question is, and I am listening to you describe what this upgrade is and what all it will do. So are we saying that it is essentially the same amount, and we are trying to apply this year for the next three to four years? Is that what you are saying? Because this is back in '21, and literally it is the same amount. Mr. Wells said, I think what this is for is for an initial upgrade process. We do currently pay Route Match a yearly fee for using their service; but this that we are looking at is an initial upgrade of getting in to the new software. But I am going to leave the financials to someone a bit more knowledgeable on that.

Grants Director Jeremy Biggs approached the podium and said, sure. Great question, Dr. Coleman. So, it says '21 money. So, you know, we all recall this big thing called Covid, and we got a lot of extra money infused in the municipal government, so a lot of the ARPA money, some of it was spent in the JETS Department, so we have a backlog of some money that has been unspent, that has been allocated for fiscal year 2021. We are trying to close out some of those older grants, and this is money that has been allocated and laying there available for three years. We are coming up to the end of that 36 month period, so we are trying to get rid of that grant and close that grant out and move on to our next fiscal year grants for JETS. Chairman Joe Hafner said, and if it's not obligated, you have to send it back. Mr. Biggs said, correct. Chairman Joe Hafner said, so we are trying to obligate it to this. Mr. Biggs said, so we get FTA money allocations every fiscal year, and this is just left over from 2021 because we had such a large infusion of extra money from ARPA.

Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, so this maybe for Steve or somebody. I would like to know kind of where we are with the ARPA, like, what has been spent and what we need to allocate. Because I know we had discussed that some time back. I think back in December we were talking about potentially allocating this ARPA and I just wanted to know. You don't have to answer today, but at some point within our Finance meeting or full council or something. I would just like to know where we are on ARPA and suggestions and recommendations, and then these situations as well. So what we have allotted, what we are trying to get spent or whatever, and then what we have left over, and then those allotments. I would like to know that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Joe Hafner said, if you want to answer, if you want to talk now, you can. I think part of this will be, I know the mayor was planning on working on his revised Capital Plan too. And I think part of it will be covered in that when that is presented to us, but that doesn't mean that we can't have an update on what the current standing of everything is whenever Steve is ready to present it. Finance Director Steve Purtee approached the podium and said, I will just kind of recap some of our budget conversation. You know, we indicated that we have (and again, I am going from memorization so we can provide you that report) about fifteen and a half million dollars of ARPA funding. It has earned about $450,000 of interest over that period of time. We have appropriated seven million of that. We have roughly eight million available for appropriation. And I believe in those schedules, that we were kind of bouncing around in earlier actions it was showing those various components of that that had been appropriated, as well as those recommended appropriations. So right now, as of today, we have roughly 8.2 million in available funding out of the ARPA fund. Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, great. Yes, and I think I am kind of with Mr. McClain that if you can kind of show us on paper, I am an eyes guy. A visual learner. So where we can see where we are and then potentially what we would like to do or what the Administration would like to do. Thank you.

A motion was made by Brian Emison, seconded by Charles Coleman, that this matter be Recommended to Council. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 4 - Charles Coleman;David McClain;Brian Emison and Anthony Coleman

Absent: 2 - Ann Williams and John Street

RES-24:008   A RESOLUTION TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH PLACER LABS INC. FOR DATA COMPILING SOFTWARE TO PROVIDE VITAL INFORMATION FOR GRANT WRITING EFFORTS

Sponsors: Grants and Finance

Attachments: Placer Labs Inc

Councilmember David McClain said, do you guys mind to explain exactly. I kind of understand, but I want to make sure I understand completely what the software, what this will do. And it says it will help identify need for pedestrian traffic origination and all that. What does that mean? I mean, does it help me understand how our pedestrian traffic is right now in the city, or what? Explain this to me if you don't mind. Grants Director Jeremy Biggs approached the podium and said, this company has a mind-blowing technology that is available. We have sat through some demos on it, and we feel that it is going to be very beneficial to multiple departments in the city. Other commissions in the city potentially could find very valuable use out of this. It will allow you to track foot traffic, really vehicle traffic. It follows along, everybody carries a phone with them nowadays, so they use some random apps that they have contracts with that help us that use your GPS data in your phone to track that movement. So if people come to the downtown barbecue festival, we can see 10,000 people come downtown. We can see what zip codes they came from, other states they came from, where they left when they went from downtown, where they immediately went to. We can track users on our trail systems right now, how many people are walking on our trails on a daily basis, monthly basis, annual basis, where those people are coming from, the different zip codes in Jonesboro or zip codes outside of the city limits. And we can see how heavily parks and rec facilities are being used. It will help us present a need that is based in real data when we approach foundations or federal agencies for future funding. So we can have our own unique data set that really allows us to tell a more detailed story about what our community looks like and what the needs of the community are.

Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, so I had to, and normally now (and you can correct me if I am wrong) but typically on these resolutions and requests, the amounts and all of that is in the resolution and it wasn't in there. Of course, we had to look at the contract. Is that a misstep, or is it just something different, because I think the contract says $20,000 a year. Is that right? And then other incidentals? Mr. Biggs said, the reason it is coming before Finance and City Council (Brian can correct me if I am wrong), we are entering into a contract. There are some confidentiality issues that we have to enter into with this company for sure; and any contractual agreement has to be approved by City Council. This $20,000 is under the threshold of Council approval, but it is just procedurally correct to come before Council to get any approved contracts. The contract is attached, I believe. Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, yes, I am looking at it. It says $20,000 a year. Mr. Biggs said, yes. Chairman Joe Hafner said, I'll just say this. If we want to make an amendment where it says the annual cost of $20,000 is below the threshold, we could amend the resolution to put the amount in here if the committee thinks it is necessary. Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman

said, no, I am good with that. I just didn't know. Chairman Joe Hafner said, I don't think there is a requirement that the amount is in here all the time.

Chief Administrative Officer Brian Richardson approached the podium and said, well, a lot of times when there are contractual issues and stuff that come before Council, sometimes there isn't always a black and white price. There are some options to have sometimes that are on there. So really the contract lays out kind of a range of some of these that allows the mayor the ability to negotiate with the vendor up to a certain amount. But this one is just a pretty flat rate. We've got no issues if we want to add the actual amount into the resolution. It's just sometimes it is in and sometimes it is not. But it is under the purchasing guidelines, but it comes here because it is a contract. Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, so Mr. Chairman, I don't have a problem with moving it forward as is. I think that especially with you sharing with us, Mark, the possibility of knowing where people are and all of that. When you talk GPS and all of that, then people get very concerned about that. And I think when it goes before full Council, we might want to express that again during that time.

Mr. Richardson approached the podium and said, Dr. Coleman just made a comment and I think it is worth clarifying. This is just raw data that the city gets that is organized. This isn't, you know, Dr. Coleman was here at this time. That is not something that we are privy to. This is just bulk numbers as far as Person X and there were a thousand people down here. So just to clarify, we can't see all one thousand people through this. This is just giving you an idea of activity. Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said, we have very involved citizens, so I just thought it would be good to say that. Chairman Joe Hafner said, I think everybody with an iPhone knows that they are somehow… Councilmember David McClain said, being tracked. On social media, you're definitely being tracked. Chairman Joe Hafner said, yes, especially if you have Life 360 or use Google Maps or have any tracking software on your phone. But I think the important thing is, and you all can clarify, that people's privacy is kept private. Mr. Biggs said, that is part of the reason we are entering into the contract for the confidentiality side for us. We are protecting anybody. Like Brian said, there is no identifying information except for zip codes or states of where people are traveling to and from. That is very valuable information for our parks and rec and trails and A&P commission, whatever it may be, festivals. But also, to Dr. Coleman's point, everybody, all these apps that they use to create that data, you are opting in to be able to use that. You are saying okay on every individual's phone giving permission for that app to track you. Or either not track you. Chairman Joe Hafner said, it's in the fine print. Read the fine print.

A motion was made by Brian Emison, seconded by Charles Coleman, that this matter be Recommended to Council . The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 4 -   Charles Coleman;David McClain;Brian Emison and Anthony Coleman

Absent: 2 -   Ann Williams and John Street

5.   PENDING ITEMS

6.   OTHER BUSINESS

7.   PUBLIC COMMENTS

8. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Brian Emison, seconded by David McClain, that this meeting be Adjourned. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 4 - Charles Coleman;David McClain;Brian Emison and Anthony Coleman

Absent: 2 - Ann Williams and John Street