

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE
STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
JANUARY 11, 2020 8:30 A.M.
COUNCIL CAUCUS ROOM**

Vice Mayor Grendel called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. Present were Council Members, Kathleen Kapusta, Tom Narduzzi, Kenn Synek, Jim Trakas, Dale Veverka and Chris Walchanowicz. Also present were Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz, Finance Director Vern Blaze, City Engineer Don Ramm, Procurement Coordinator Dennis Zdolshek, IT Department Administrator Ryan Prosser, Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko, Engineering Administrative Assistant Coral Troxell, School Board President Lynne Laski, residents Roger Lesh, Dr. Carl Asseff and Amanda Jaranowski.

Vice Mayor Grendel said welcome everyone to the annual Strategic Planning Committee meeting. We are hoping to maybe make it semi-annual, depending on how things go. I think this setting on Saturday morning, it's a little informal and everything. It is always good for dialogue back and forth to make sure we are on the same page. I said I think Jim Crooks was probably one of the ones who initiated having that. It is always good to start off the year and see where the Mayor is at; especially this year it's even more important because we are starting a new four year term. That's why you see a skinny agenda here; but I thought the main thing is to find out Mayor what some of your goals are and that so that this way Council can weigh in early on in the process. We can say what goals. I have noticed in the Minutes of the last few, and we talked about some things. We talked about the cemetery, but really nothing ever took hold with that. We would like to get things going with a new Council. I am glad Doc is here because Kenn is taking over; and Doc you are the only Chairman we have had of Economic Development. Doc can give you some ideas if you want to embellish them or mold them the way you want in conjunction with what the Administration has planned too.

The same thing, Chris you are taking over for Tom. Tom has long been Chairman of the Public Lands & Buildings; and again, I know Tom with your work schedule, the two years I was Chairman, I liked having that tour. Dave Snyderburn loved giving the tour, taking Council. We were up on the roof of the Civic Center I think with the nooks and crannies. It kind of gives Council an idea when the Mayor makes a proposal or we have proposals to spend money to do certain things. We actually have seen it, and we know for sure what we are doing and everything. So, Chris you can take off on a variation of that; and I think Mayor in the next four years Public Lands & Buildings will have a lot to work with too, a lot of projects probably.

So, that's why this is an informal setting, and I think when the appropriate time comes if there are contributions from the audience and everything; Mayor you will be able to see them better than I will. I thought this way we will get started with Debi calling the roll and start from there.

The roll was then called.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked what time was everybody thinking? Traditionally, we finish around noon time or so.

Several people began speaking at once.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we will just play it by ear, but we will shoot for around noon time as far as it goes.

The first thing we have to do is to approve the Minutes from last year, January 5, 2019.

Moved by Veverka, seconded by Trakas, to approve the January 5, 2019 Strategic Planning Minutes as amended. Voice Vote: 7 yes/0 no; motion carried.

Vice Mayor Grendel said last year we started off the Strategic Planning with Mike Gero and discussed the legislation that was passed. It has been a couple of years now for people who had rental property and registration of that. I don't know if the participation has gotten any better with that or not over the last year.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I have not checked, but the last time we met with Mike his big thing Mayor was that when he did slap somebody on the hand, and we ended up going to court; the court system and the court threw it back and didn't do anything. So, it seems to be the violators are the continuous people, and this keeps going and keeps going. Mike gets to a point, and he throws his hands up and says all I can do is send them a letter because it goes no further.

We had talked as a whole of getting some of the judges in here and sitting them down and trying to help create a path of what we could do to whatever we were going to have for these people to enforce it instead of just sending them back and saying don't do that again because it was getting us nowhere. It died after that. I mean we never had another meeting.

Councilperson Kapusta said we talked about supplemental staffing too, be it a seasonal person or adding on to his current staffing; and I don't think that ever transpired either.

The Clerk said there was an ad out there.

Mayor Kurtz said after reading the Minutes of the 2019 Strategic Planning, I am convinced that was a concern; and one of the things, I did research with my colleagues, the Mayors and find out what other communities are doing. We are going to come up with a more intense enforcement mechanism, and we may need some legislation to support that strategy; but it's not meant to be punitive, it's purely meant to do what the people told us they wanted us to do, clean up the City. It's our image. It is our personality; and I think if we allow it to continue, then we are taking away from the community. So, our goal, and I talked to Mike briefly; we are going to put together not only some legislation, we need to sink some teeth into it. We are also going to go for a strategy to communicate with the people. It's not going to be just send them a letter. We are going to talk to them. We are going to expose the situation so that if they are not aware, they will be aware; and then if they are not cooperative, we will find a mechanism to pull them into something that's more reasonable to the community. It's just not acceptable the way it is.

Councilperson Veverka said I have a question along those lines. Which particular one of the seven committees do you feel this would best shoe horn into? I will say going beyond that before I let you answer. Over the past two years I noticed that we have had a number of times when we had scheduled workshops; and in the workshops we focused on specific targets that would have been in, for example, in my committee, Streets & Sidewalks. It should have just come to the committee; the committees here, various Council members can attend and be involved with the decisions. That way we can avoid workshops that are scatter gun, a bunch of different topics and target those particular issues with specific committees.

Mayor Kurtz said to answer your question, once we get organized, we see what it is; then we will bring it to Council, and you can direct where you want it to go.

Councilperson Veverka said right.

Dr. Carl Asseff said the legislation should involve all Council because the failure of our program right now is that house that sits on the corner of Kingscote and Brecksville Road. That is the failure of what we are trying to do. So, we need to clean up and make sure that every house is subject to the same statutes, the same scrutiny and the same hammer so that we cannot get fixated with the rentals.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I think it covers all housing.

Mayor Kurtz said let's make sure it does.

Councilperson Trakas said it does.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Narduzzi said remember Jim Lentz was in here, and he was saying we were picking on the renters; so we made it for a broader scale.

Mayor Kurtz said so just to conclude on that, we are going to look into it. Once we have a strategy, we will come to Council; and you can figure out where you want it to go.

Councilperson Trakas said Mayor, the feedback that I think we had gotten over the course of the last several years was that the Building Department didn't have. So, obviously looking at the inspection report and seeing 130 houses a week. How much inspecting can we be doing? So, I think the veracity of the inspection needs to be addressed; but also when you look at legislation, can you go on someone's property? I think that has been the big issue that Mike has not been able to really, it's a visual inspection from basically one side of the house. So, I think the ability to perhaps create not an intrusive government but some ability for us to let the individual know that we are going to be going on your property. Maybe send letters ahead of time, we are going

to be inspecting your neighborhood on such and such a week. Maybe that might spur some action.

Mayor Kurtz said and the resources are thin in the Building Department to be able to do more comprehensive enforcement; but we will be back to Council during hopefully, before we finalize the budget with our needs. You can weigh in and determine if that's what you want to do; and if you agree, we will get it going that way. I think we want to put something in the budget to allow us some flexibility in bringing some people in to help us.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think Tom's concern is of the phone calls we do get, that is the one topic about neighbors, their home and everything.

Any other comments from Council from last year's meeting?

Mayor Kurtz said I will inject some of comments in this discussion I have this morning, the presentation. I have incorporated some of the issues that were raised such as trees and landscaping and things of that nature into this presentation. So, you may see some of that during the presentation.

Councilperson Kapusta asked will you be addressing Mayor the Council and Board of Education because we had comments about that in here that we thought we should meet on a (inaudible) basis.

Mayor Kurtz said as a matter of fact the Superintendent reached out, and they have formed a new committee to be a liaison, to communicate more timely or effectively with the City. So, that's one of the things we will talk about as a group as we settle in.

Vice Mayor Grendel said and I think we need to talk about TIF financing because last year right after the (inaudible) with the schools, and we thought communication, maybe even education of the residents about that. That might be one thing you might want to put in how important that is to the City, and give a better understanding. So, then people or groups will talk about TIF as being a bad thing when it really is a good supplemental; so I think a better understanding might be something we will try to communicate too with the residents and how it's part of our packaging of how we finance things and big projects especially.

Mayor Kurtz said I could say the Finance Director, but we will keep it informal. Vern just showed me, and I'm not sure if you have seen it yet; but a summary of our TIF revenues and expenses related to it, our total income tax. So, it's an interesting little; and I asked him if he would go back and do the last four or five years for it. So, it will be a nice summary which to launch a discussion.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good, and we will probably have a Finance Committee meeting sometime in the next, at your direction.

Any other because we will move on.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I think just the cemetery.

Mayor Kurtz said we are going to talk about that.

Vice Mayor Grendel said you are right Tom. I think even besides that, last year we talked about having a fence around it and everything else; but I don't know how many more lots are left to bury people.

Mayor Kurtz said only on demand now. They just can't call and get them.

Vice Mayor Grendel said that's the thing, doing estate planning and a lot of estate work; I see a lot of the older residents, they are more concerned about the future.

Mayor Kurtz said your customers are usually the customers down at the cemetery. We will not let you down. We will come up with something.

Vice Mayor Grendel said there are so many going into cremations now.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Veverka said and scatter gardens.

Vice Mayor Grendel said and scatter gardens. There are all different options. The other thing too is just the future of the Service Department facility there. All the major purchases that we have made, the trucks and machinery and everything; we want to make sure, although the weather has been kind of mild the last few winters and haven't had anything rough.

Mayor Kurtz said keep going because you are just blending right into some of the things we are going to talk about. I am excited to hear these things.

Councilperson Kapusta said one other thing when I reviewed the Minutes from last year that we talked about was Debi's backup. That is something that had been a perennial issue for us, her lack of backup, let's put it that way. So, if we could start to address that too because it's not fair to her, vacation time and all that; and it would be helpful to have that.

Mayor Kurtz said that blends right into what we want to do. I am going to pull together the exempt and non-exempt ordinance because we do have to discuss and make some modifications and address that issue as part of it.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I guess Debi's been in limbo the last, between that.

Mayor Kurtz said let's get her out of limbo.

Vice Mayor Grendel said Debi mentioned that she will not be available for the July meeting; so we might have to either.

Councilperson Kapusta said we will just cancel it then.

Finance Director Blaze said summer recess.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Vice Mayor Grendel said and we are blessed. We have one of the best Clerks of Council in the county or in the whole state.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked anything else from last year before we have the Mayor present?

So, basically as a new Council member, you kind of mold, you get an idea, you learn from the past and everything. You kind of mold your committee to how you want it. I am firm believer that a lot of work gets done through the committee because the Councilperson takes ownership. Like Dale takes ownership of the Streets & Sidewalks. Kathleen has taken ownership of the Civic Center, and the activities that go on. Jim with the Utilities, and with what Tom will be doing with Safety now and Public Lands. So, you kind of take ownership of that area so you are the force that keeps things moving in conjunction with the Mayor and Administration.

Councilperson Kapusta said well I made that suggestion yesterday to Dale when we talked that I think we should go more with our committees than the workshops. The reason I did that was because we say we are going to set up a workshop, but then we try to get all the people together; and it doesn't happen. At least your committees, you are talking about three.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. Mayor, we will turn over the presentation to you.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you everyone. I want to thank City Council for inviting me to participate in Council's 2020 Strategic Planning session. I also want to thank Coral and Ryan and Jeremy for their efforts. You are going to see this morning, and I guess we changed things up a little bit because when I came into this room; I said unless you are sitting in a strategic area, you really can't see the visual aids that some developer or someone is trying to do. We added that screen. Our group did that. I can't thank them enough. I was out of town for training in Columbus the last couple of days. So, they had to really do some extra heavy lifting because I wasn't here.

So, what we are going to use is the boards as visual aids. I think what I am trying to say is we have a, I look at today as our journey. It's a journey for 2020, 2030, 2040; and I view it as a book. These are the bookends that I am putting together today because a book as you know defines the flavor of the content; but really the chapters are the chapters you will be creating over time. You will fill those chapters with content that we will use, and future generations will be able to reference. Today we are going to talk about things in concept, purely in conceptual form and idea form. I am not here to impose. I am here to just offer a variety of suggestions; and

obviously like I said, you will help fill in the chapters. We will discuss. We will look at discussing. We will implement. We will measure our success over time as our previous generations did, and time as we all know necessitates changes, both from an economic standpoint, demographic, culture and community. So, sit back and be open-minded and realize today's goal is to just look at the book and establish a foundation, a framework.

Journey 2020 is simply to kind of introduce new concepts, ideas and information because, as you know, for the new representatives, Council you are the authorizing entity. You have the ability to buy and sell property, the Mayor doesn't. You fund all property and infrastructure improvements. You fund all programs and the operating budget. So, today it's to add a chapter, add chapters to the book, the vision; and each chapter is going to be sort of a marker. You will see as we go through the presentation that the goal is through Council working with the Administration, the Finance Department, the public and the community, will fill each one of these chapters with information and will arrive at decisions. That will help guide our community for future generations.

So, let's begin with ground zero, City Hall. I told Debi if I go off on tangents too long that she should just give me one of those scowls, and it will put me back on track.

Councilperson Trakas said she doesn't even know how to do that.

Mayor Kurtz said 40 years ago, believe it or not, in two years this building will be 40 years old; and when you really pause and think about that what former Mayor Pete Wisnieski put together with a group of Councilmen, and it was futuristic. It was \$3.5 million or \$4 million, \$4.2 million to give you a perspective. By way of history, when you think about it, what was the image or the stature of our community before this? Cuyahoga Heights was the economic powerhouse. The schools benefitted from Valley View and Brooklyn Heights because of that economic engine they had it with Alcoa and LTV; and so we were just a little more sleep community. So, what transitioned? What changed? Two things, I think it was Pete's vision, and Council's willingness to go along with the heavy lifting of that vision. I think also I-77 and I-480 didn't hurt the situation. I can go off onto the story about I-480, and I-77 and how it moved over time; but that would take us a little bit longer.

Councilperson Trakas said if you live on Chestnut, bless your lucky stars.

Mayor Kurtz said there was an exit planned for Chestnut, and it was actually Bob Briggs told the story. He lived on Latonia, and he woke up and looked at the paper in the 1960's, and he sees it coming right through his front yard on Second Street. So, he formed a group with the Mayor's blessing and got it pushed. Originally, they designed it to push it to the Seven Hills line as he told me the story. Originally, he said just let's be fair to the communities and let's do it right to the line; and ODOT wouldn't go that far. So, it ended up right where it is today. So, sometimes the best blessing are the ones you fall back on; but they did eliminate the ramp onto Chestnut Road so we don't have to deal with that today.

Pete and Council had the vision of building this facility. At the time it was “Pete’s Palace” and wasting all this money; and actually it elevated our stature in the southern suburbs, the southern tier as I call it. Obviously, his vision created something that is really almost 40 years later, now why do I say that; I will get into that in a few minutes. Independence is the heart of Cuyahoga County. We are the center of the southern tier. We are surrounded by, and on the next slide I will share it with you. We have the largest economy of the southern tier communities, Brecksville, Broadview Heights, Seven Hills, Brooklyn Heights, Cuyahoga Heights, Valley View. They all touch Independence; and we are the economic engine, the largest economic engine. We have a unique opportunity to overlap our responsibilities with these communities. The way I look at it now is you can’t polarize yourself. You have to actually be willing to be open-minded to creating synergy with respect to resources, attitude; and I will talk about that a little down the road and our potential overlapping responsibilities. Safety being a major component of that area of responsibility; but by communicating the larger picture and identifying ourselves as a premier community and inducing business leaders; and we have been known for attracting businesses on Rockside. As a matter of fact, in Columbus I was to meet with a friend whose son works at a company on Rockside; and he said we are considered a hub. It’s a hub for IT. It’s to me Silicon Valley; that’s what he was just saying. He said they are always looking to expand. His business is looking to expand, right now find more space. So, we have to be recognized that’s a unique force for us, and as Doc would say with the economic development strategies, and now Kenn. That’s going to be one of the challenges we have is harnessing some of those opportunities.

He also said this. I said so where does your son live. He said in Gordon Square. I said why doesn’t he live in Independence. We don’t have a component to attract some of these major players in our Rockside Road area. So, I think what I am trying to suggest is we have to transition from, we have a hub, the southern hub, come here to build your business to we are the southern hub, build your business; but we want you. We want your family. We want to attract you, and we need to have some housing components that will attract those decision makers, these corporate decision makers. Hopefully, they will be willing to move here. That’s one of the things we need to look at in the next couple of years, inducing these business leaders to not only build or keep their companies here; but to also put their families here.

Let’s start with City Hall, and this journey we will start with City Hall; and the philosophy has always been look the building is going to be 40 years old. We need to enhance safety and security. We haven’t done anything other than a little bit of cosmetic introductions over the last four decades; but safety and security, technology. Public Buildings & Lands will be very busy. We had a meeting already with Ryan and some of the people who were looking at enhancing our technology.

I have also learned that we have had security discussions, enhanced security. Remember, we do a multitude of things, so we have to be able to secure the Administrative staff just like the Police staff. We also have to address court customers, and so we are going to present a comprehensive plan to Public Buildings & Lands that is going to deal with the security, deal with technology upgrades. We sat in Council Chambers, and we are going to request and talk to Council about enhanced technology in that room so that each member of Council has the proper tools in front

of them. Developers can come in and make presentations to where we can see everything. We are going to change the appearance of that room to make it more user friendly, as well as beneficial for anybody who approaches the Planning Commission and any other group that uses that.

So, basically, and as we move forward to the next slide; my philosophy has always been, and I think your philosophy has always been to purchase any property contiguous to the campus that is available and not occupied, displacing somebody. We have bought little properties over the years, but there is one right now that we looked at back in 2015 at the end of the year. I believe that it is available. We could put something together if Council so chooses because Council is the only group that can buy and sell property. This 4 ½ acres presents an opportunity; and it's consistent with the philosophy of buying properties that are uninhabited, that people are willing to sell, just give future generations the opportunity to do something if we don't find a way to utilize it. Just like previous leaders gave us opportunities. We wouldn't have the Civic Center today if our forefathers wouldn't have given us the opportunity to put that campus together. So, City Hall we will talk about and share with Council on our strategy; and hopefully we could put some funds aside and be able to upgrade this four decade old building to make it more user friendly.

Now we go to my great, a little further west. Before we get to the Civic Center, here's the framework of the discussion today. Area 1 is the campus, and the discussion about City Hall. Area 2 will be the Civic Center and the school campus. Area 3 we will move down to the downtown area. We will talk about the downtown concepts, and then we will go over to the northwest quadrant. We will go to the northeast quadrant; and then we will end up at the Cloverleaf before the journey takes us all the way to the southern most end of our community; and we will talk about some of the ongoing projects we have going, and we will sprinkle that with some of the opportunities for the future during this term and for future generations. I want to give you flavor of where the journey is going to take us today.

You can see again, as I mentioned earlier that we are bordered by Brecksville, Broadview Heights, Seven Hills, Brooklyn Heights, Cuyahoga Heights and Valley View. So, we are the hub. We are the center. We are the premier community, and we are the economic powerhouse. We are also the leader in defining the southern tier opportunities and making sure every community has an opportunity to be vibrant, to be successful and to look for future generations to be successful.

This gives you a flavor of the opportunities on our campus. We have the Luvison property on the left. We have the Londrico property on the right. We own property that's south of Selig, and then of course the campus and the educational component of it. So, it's a large footprint, but it's laced with opportunities for future generations.

When I talk about the, and this is just a bigger enhancement of what we put together several years ago when we were able to re-define the Selig Road entrance to Brecksville Road; and this incorporates a roundabout. When I get to the end of the presentation, I come back to the campus, you will know the significance or importance of a roundabout at Selig and Kathy Lynn. Suffice

to say, you can see we already have planning in place to address some of the logistical issues if we are going to enhance the campus, the school campus.

Also, we talked several years ago about the possibility of an emergency ramp onto I-77 northbound; and you can see that in order to achieve that, we are going to have to split the Service Department. You can't split the Service Department, but you can if you repurpose the Service Department. Again, I am going to sprinkle this a little bit to do some thoughts; but we are not going to focus on this right now. We are going to our journey to allow the community, and we will come back to this area when we are done.

Again, this is another example of the emergency ramp, and you can see it splits the Service Department. I caution everybody. These are all concepts. I don't have authority from Council, but my goal today is to at least go forward for your ability to look at, review and then we can start forming a strategy, goals and decisions.

This is another example of what I mentioned earlier about a premier community and making sure we are identified as that premier community in the southern tier. This was something that was really an extension of the Selig Road upgrades. We didn't put this together, but I pulled it back out as something that I think is really important as we look to further redefine and identify ourselves and our community.

Now I want to move the journey to downtown. We have all talked about it, and we have all participated in discussions at one point or another; but you can see from this overview the opportunities. I do have a meeting scheduled with Father John from St. Michael's. Some of the homeowners, the landowners have contacted me already and are willing to sit and talk about participating in this upgrade. This will give you as a flavor from a different perspective as the drone looks at this area. It actually gives you a real opportunity to identify the full breath of opportunity. If the guy who was running the drone knew what he was doing; and by the way, that's me.

Dr. Asseff said your fingerprints are all over it.

Mayor Kurtz said I do confess that I caught a couple of rotors one time in a fence.

It gives you a perspective in terms of the opportunity, the full breath of the opportunity. Like I said, take it easy.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said but this gives you a flavor of the full potential of downtown where people have said they wanted it to be walkable. They want to be able to come to the downtown area. They want to embrace a community connection where they can see friends, see neighbors, meet friends, meet neighbors, bring their family with fountains. I want to incorporate some of the aesthetics that we worked on the last couple of years, more of a blending of the two concepts that the City has on record and creating a new Master Plan using the St. Michael's area, redefining

that. It would be good for the church, good for the community, good for our property; and then being able to raze some of the properties, clean it up and ultimately have something that the people can come to. They can have small businesses, places to come with their kids; and the goal is also as part of this is something else that we discovered which is resident retention. I believe on the back, the eastern portion, not overlooking the properties because I have had conversations with some of you and being sensitive to the people on Tulip Trail. That's something that we will definitely take into consideration as part of this process. Having some type of housing that allows us to retain some of our residents is really a driving force for me because I see too many of our residents and friends; and all of you have witnessed residents and friends moving out of the City to small homes in Brecksville because we don't have that component. So, the goal is to introduce that concept, blend the two concepts of the past eight to ten years into something that is workable that addresses the aesthetics, but also addresses function. One of the goals is resident retention.

So, we move from there; and again another concept, it's one of the original concepts. We have to filter through some of these as character builders, and designs and all of these can play a role in blending together something that is good for the residents, that the residents clearly articulated that is what they want to see. There are residents who want to stay in the City that have basically told me, and I am sure that they told all of you that if we don't introduce some housing alternatives; that they will also move. That's not right. It's not good. It's not right, and we want to attract a variety of families and retain those families who really don't want to leave all the wonderful amenities of our community; but we don't offer them anything to induce them and incentivize them to stay here. You can see that there has been a lot of thought put into this over the past ten years, and my goal is to incorporate as many of those concepts into a Master Plan from the past ten years; and then find out what works today, and then go from there.

Moving more north to Rockside and moving to the northwest quadrant; you can see there is a tremendous opportunity in the northwest quadrant. That is the diamond in the rough. Basically, what I am identifying is Seven Hills in this drone footage. That is Seven Hills, and the purpose of me mentioning that is because I had the privilege of being at the Seven Hills Swearing In last weekend; and I was impressed with their relationship. They realize now that, this is the Seven Hills side of the development. Independence is on the left, and the new Seven Hills development is on the right; and I mention this because I was impressed with their communication. Council and the Mayor really did have a genuine working relationship and really wanted to work together, to do something together as a community. The Mayor reached out to me and said look we know that it's important that we work with Independence because all of the infrastructure, the traffic concerns and utilities come to Independence; and we have the northwest quadrant. We have Lombardo Center Drive and access off Seven Hills. So, I am excited about the opportunity to work together. They are more sophisticated than in the past. Now we need to talk to them and work with them because they are excited about their \$150 million dollar development; and I am excited about the northwest quadrant. So, I am saying, okay, I believe listening to their leadership the other day, their Council; they really want to work together as a group. They want to work together with Independence. So, I am excited to say, that relationships I talked about earlier with us being the southern tier hub is critical to moving forward. I believe we are the

beacon. We are the core of the southern tier, and the question I have is can we thrive as a community if we were to continue the lines of being the best kept secret because really if you think about it, for the past several decades, we kind of prided ourselves, we are the best kept secret. I really wonder if that's really the mindset that's going to catapult us into success for the next several decades. I think we have to improve our image. We have to become a magnet of the southern tier. We have to attract business. We have to attract leadership. We have to be able to attract families and work with our neighboring communities to help them with some of their challenges, knowing that we are the infrastructure hub. We need to work together. They are successful. We are successful. We are the economic engine that can drive all of the success for the southern tier in my opinion. That's a part of the uncut diamond. Actually, it goes further north. We had an agreement years ago with Brooklyn Heights, which is still in effect, to have 15 acres of the 100 acres; if we are going to access the northwest quadrant. So, I believe that this is bigger than just one single development. I think we have to look at a comprehensive plan, and we have to be able to talk back and forth with Seven Hills to make sure we are not missing any opportunities, whether they are infrastructure, whether they are utilities, whether they are safety. All these components blend into success for both communities.

Let's move over to, you can see what their plan is. You can see what they are trying to do. This is another addition that is going to make a big difference for us getting off at Rockside Road. It is in the works. Don has brought me up to speed, and I believe that ODOT is moving forward.

City Engineer Ramm said they preliminarily approved the concept and approved our operation study, the interchange operation study. The concern was that this improvement was going to degrade their highway; and the study has determined that it won't. They are accepting of that. Just some little bit of details on the bridge crossing and meeting design criteria. We are poised to potentially receive some funding through the Highway Safety Program for that improvement.

Mayor Kurtz said good. Again, this is an example of the image enhanced. We talked about it at Selig, but I think at the exit ramp of I-77 and Rockside and also you can see the exit ramp southbound and also northbound. It reminds me of Rock Hill when you are going on I-77 through either North Carolina or South Carolina. When you drive through you see this clock tower. You just never forget that it's Rock Hill, and we could put that clock tower on mounding that was created as you exit I-77 to Rockside. It's all about identity, and reimagining ourselves to attract business, to retain business and to let people know that we are the premier community of the southern tier.

Now I move over to the northeast quadrant, and a little progress report. You can see the road is finished to a point; the heavy lifting is the next phase. It's crossing the creek. The EPA has approved that, correct Don?

City Engineer Ramm said correct. The culvert extension with slight impacts to the wetlands; it will allow us to build that road out to 21.

Mayor Kurtz asked and when's the anticipated completion date of that road out to Brecksville Road?

City Engineer Ramm said it's going to be late this year, early next year.

Mayor Kurtz asked so by mid-summer will they have it done do you think?

City Engineer Ramm said summer or fall. That should be the time.

Mayor Kurtz said I guess this is another opportunity, the remaining sites of opportunity in that area. When you talk about the northeast quadrant, you talk about the impact on the residents in that area. I believe that Longano and Kleber have to have their own identity. We have to reassure the residents that they are going to remain vibrant, important to our community. So, how do we do that? There's a little lot next to Longano Drive; we buy that lot and convert it to a boulevard entrance. We have sound barriers, working with the State, along that section of I-480. If you ever travel I-480 east, when you look to the right just before the bridge, you will see the backyards of the residents on Kleber. So, we need to make sure that it's sustainable; and that we make upgrades to the infrastructure to make sure the residents on the east side know that they are important and they could stay there as long as they want. We have to make sure that we are doing our job to make sure the infrastructure is enhanced; and we will in that area.

The purpose of this slide is to say the people on the west side, according to my discussions with Jeremy, the west side has a lot of rentals. There is a whole range of opportunities on that side of the street in terms of what we want to do; and we are just beginning to explore the different possibilities, but upgrading Brecksville Road from Rockside to the Cloverleaf, to me if I were to do the boulevard, I would do the center island like on the south side of Rockside. I would make sure that both of those two subdivisions understand that they are important, and that we are going to do everything we can to identify that. The people on the west side obviously are mostly renters, and we will look at repurposing that property. The heavy lifting will be when we present and agree on a strategy in that area whether we re-zone or repurpose that property and making sure that we are sensitive to the residents. They are part of those discussions; and so that's important that we engage the residents early on. I intend to do that once we see how we are progressing. When that road opens up, it's going to change the dynamic in that area. It's going to change. So, we need to plant seeds and have ourselves prepared to respond to some of the concerns. I talked to residents, and some are putting a stake in the ground.

You will recall back when we put the AAA property together, everyone was allowed or permitted or enticed, that's probably the best word, to relocate. My strategy was always we will make sure you get more money than market value, but stay in Independence, upgrade. So, that hasn't changed for me. Anybody who wants to move, they should move to Independence, stay in Independence, upgrade in Independence; and then their property will be part of a strategic plan that is good for us financially and long term for this area.

So, I also believe that ODOT is going to widen the bridge, and that will allow us; I think they are going to enhance the bridge. Now I want them to widen it though. I want them to look at the infrastructure and widen it because it's going to affect us long term. So, as we go forward, I think we have to have a Master Plan for this entire area, taking the history, historical concepts that Jeremy and I have generally worked with and seeing what we can blend together and what will get traction from a development standpoint. That will include infrastructure as well as, you know Brecksville Road may not be in the same location; but that's just playing what if.

So, as we move over to I-480, we get to the Cloverleaf area; and to me, and you can see it's a large abstract. It's heavy industrial; so it's got some rough edges. I consider it a diamond in the rough. I think we need to have a Master Plan for this entire area; and to give you a different perspective. Here's a view from AAA's lot. This is where the road is going to be extended and finalized onto Brecksville Road. You will see houses on the west side, most of them are rentals. The people right there are the most affected. We need to be very sensitive to future use of that property, and you can see the opportunity, it's almost mind boggling because it's access to the interstate system, access to downtown right there, the east side, west side. So, again it is heavy industrial, but this gives you a perspective of the latest view of Topgolf. One of the challenges we are seeing is parking on the road right now. So, again what's going to happen when we open the road? So, we are going to have to address that. This gives you a real time perspective of where we are at today. Don how's your work?

City Engineer Ramm said busy. It looks great.

Mayor Kurtz said there's a potential site on the north half of the site, the potential to develop yet. It gives you a flavor of the significance in that area, the importance on the northern end of town, the impact on the residents. It really is another opportunity. It defines where do we want to be when we grow up.

Now back up a little bit. So, let me just talk about, go back to the northwest quadrant. Basically, I just look at this as needing to have a Master Plan because we have natural amenities. We have the railroad. We have the river, and we have the National Park to the south. You have West Creek Preservation. So, we could do something very creative in this area that we really haven't spent a lot of time thinking about which would be some type of recreational use along the river. We have to look at infrastructure upgrades and reconfiguration and talking about property we own at the pie at Old Brecksville Road and Brecksville Road to reconfigure the road. Do we look at Harry's and then Hilltop and dropping that elevation down so it opens a broad view to anybody who wants to build a corporate headquarters there. You have a perfect, beautiful location for use. ODOT has abandoned their yard; so I am going to find out why they haven't just given it to us because I think we could use the salt dome. We could use some of that infrastructure at least until there's a more permanent use; but we have to clean up the north end of town. We have to use, there's another property, the hotel. I believe that the City ought to look at that. We have to look at acquiring it, razing it and protecting the City long term.

Everybody has driven north on 21 and driven on to I-77. What's the one thing that you remember when you go past the river bridge?

Several people said Cuyahoga Heights' sign and their grass.

Mayor Kurtz said and that's their identifier; and to me that links up to what I am talking about, what's our identifier? We are here. We are the uncut diamond. We are the best kept secret; not anymore. We have to decide, this group right here will decide are we going to be the best kept secret or are we going to launch ourselves to be the premier community and identify ourselves as the premier community. Cuyahoga Heights identified themselves clearly, and the clock tower, the bell tower concept clearly would identify the City of Independence as being in line and consistent with our imagery. So, I think that's important that we deal with the hotel, the ODOT yard, we clean up the north end of town. It may be incrementally, but we have to clean it up.

Now moving south on Brecksville Road; we have to widen Brecksville Road. We will widen Brecksville Road. We will also, I believe we should look at a boulevard type concept for safety purposes; but as we go south and we get to the cemetery, we had the 2019 discussion. We talked about the scattering gardens. We talked about the columbarium wall, a meditation area. We talked about relocating the maintenance yard, putting money into the old Service garage and move that down there; and we could talk about a mausoleum. We could talk about a variety of different concepts that do two things; they give us more flexibility and longevity because we are running out of physical space but by adding a mausoleum or columbarium wall or spreading area, we become more sustainable. So, that's something we are going to look at. We are going to talk to experts. We will present it to Council when we get a buy in as to how we want to go forward with the cemetery; but suffice to say, we looked at the 2019 future planning, and we will address that in 2020. Any questions on the cemetery?

Councilperson Narduzzi asked is all the land bought that we could buy going north or is there still?

Mayor Kurtz said we own all the property, the road, the Cavs' road south. There's a piece north, but then we would be putting cemetery on both sides of the road; and it's probably not in our best interest. I would rather become sustainable by a mausoleum or a columbarium wall, different concepts that are really taking shape over the last couple of decades. It's going to become more enhanced going into the future; but we own everything, the Cavs' road south today.

Councilperson Trakas asked that's all zoned for the cemetery?

Mayor Kurtz said you control the zoning.

Councilperson Trakas said we should do that.

Mayor Kurtz said I guess the answer is yes, if it's what Council wants.

Councilperson Trakas said we should do that.

Mayor Kurtz said it's by virtue of the fact that you own the land, you control it. It is exempt from zoning. It's the question of how you want to use it. So, that shouldn't be an issue.

If we journey further south, we get to Brecksville Road and 21. A couple of things of interest; one we have a safety issue with water sheeting over the road when we have some of these storms, and we need to address that. I think the first and second houses are rentals, and I think if we would look at buying some of that property for a retention area. It could be a mini park, retention area; and also I would really like to have Council support putting a fence along the zoning transition from the Chase bank up the hill towards where you can't traverse the property because of the elevation change. By putting a fence between those two zoning splits, I think it would create a more safe environment. We will present that to the Public Buildings & Lands or whoever, Safety, whoever wants to address it, maybe it's Council as a whole; but I believe we should really focus on two things. We should focus on safety, and we should focus on water retention in that area so we can stop some of that water from sheeting across Brecksville Road. At the same time, keep in mind that we still have that easement for a marginal road if we want to do something from Chase all the way back to Rockside Woods South. I will pull those plans up. When the developer came in to convert the old dealership; we secured an easement from him for that. We also secured the easement from the corner shopping center. It's still feasible if Council wants to consider that as a safety alternative.

So, as we move further south after identifying that, I just want to take a moment and talk about the Lafayette area. The project started out, and it's a comprehensive project, and it entails a number of things such as new pavement, new water line. Engineering gets overwhelmed, and they are under-appreciated through its efforts; but suffice to say, it definitely will enhance that entire area. It's something that has been on the books for decades. When it's all said and done, I believe we will have something, the infrastructure will be upgraded, the road, the sewer. We will have sidewalks, and I think the mailboxes, the landscaping, we are addressing drainage issues in the rear yards; and we will continue to do that on a case-by-case basis. I also believe that when you drive up Lafayette today you see the carvings as I call them. It reminds me of Kathleen's comment about Dublin or Columbus, what she witnessed in Columbus and how you can take trees and landscaping to really enhance an area. I think that if you see the big carvings as I call them, in their naked form today; those trees have to be removed, and we have to create a new normal because we are going to have sidewalks. We should put in trees and landscaping and eliminate the carvings from the utilities on those mature trees. They just don't look right, and there's a high maintenance factor, potential liability factor; and so taking those trees down where they interfere with the utility lines and planting new trees and creating a new normal in terms of landscaping. I think that will be important.

Councilperson Trakas said last year Councilperson Veverka had an idea that I thought was worthy that would be to work with residents to place trees on private property as opposed to only on the City easement; and I think when you look at kind of, it doesn't make sense what we are

doing. We have trees going right underneath wires. I don't know why we thought that was a good idea, but we did for a long time; but I do think that was a really worthy idea to pursue that perhaps we can work with people to replace trees in different parts of property. I think and a lot more trees. I think we should have a program to encourage people to be planting trees. It really helps us a lot on the climate change issue as well as on the water flow and flooding problems that we have. The more trees we have, the more water that is being sucked up, the better off we are going to be; but I thought that was a particularly good idea because on Dalebrook, look at all those trees that grew into the utilities. What's his name over there, his big amplifiers flying out from the 1970's still wants compensation. That is the type of thing, just being a little innovative and a little practical, we can really solve those types of problems.

Mayor Kurtz said I agree. I embrace that concept, and we will put something together. What I will talk about in a few minutes is horticulture; and we need to address that. We need to address tree maintenance again in a more measured basis. We will introduce, we will talk about, and if we agree we will introduce legislation to re-create that program on a different basis. Valley View has a program, one tree a year; and you contribute the first \$500. Well, that's an investment by the homeowner; but for safety reasons, I truly believe this afternoon we will be tested again with the high winds that they anticipate. I believe that the money we spend over the decade or so with that program did save us property. I can't speak for (inaudible), but let's say this, I think we need to do something, looking into the future and all be a part of this modified tree replacement program, horticultural program, mature tree management program. I think we need to look at that, and we have an opportunity to do something; and I am happy to hear that Council is willing to be flexible in terms of placement of trees and landscaping because that would be important.

Councilperson Veverka said and along that discussion also we were talking about the fact that we have a consulting arborist resident who has indicated a willingness to be very involved in that process.

Mayor Kurtz said good. I have a number of people I have talked to over the past six months who want to participate in beautification. They want to use their expertise or their talent; and so we will embrace all of them to help us to come up with the best solution, a long term sustainable solution. We will continue to work on that continuously.

Councilperson Narduzzi said just getting back to the Lafayette subdivision. We are full go there now, on the western side they started pouring sidewalks already. They are starting to do sidewalks. So, if we are going to change our mindset on putting sidewalks where they should be and not putting them there because of a tree; then we should act on that pretty quickly. If we are going to take those trees down, they should be taken down now so in the spring when they are ready to roll with those sidewalks; they are not in the way.

Mayor Kurtz said good point.

Councilperson Narduzzi said you know what they did on my street Don because I don't believe that we should put a sidewalk there because there's a tree there. We should move the sidewalk and make it different from the other side of the street. If we are going to do it, do it right. My point is that we should actually move on that quite quickly through the Streets & Sidewalks Committee or whatever and do what we have to do because we are changing our way of thinking in the middle of a project; and I don't think it's going to come out good if we don't do something now.

Mayor Kurtz said that's a good point. We could still do something now; if we do something now, we can create a new policy.

So, I agree; let's make that adjustment right away. Let's circle the wagons and come back to Council with what we have to do because it is time sensitive; and it's something that could enhance the community.

Councilperson Trakas said and as we discussed with the discussion with Dale. So, when you take out big trees, and put in these little trees; there's a consequence from water flows, so remember maybe we should be putting several trees in if we are taking out big trees. That's why I also think Mayor that maybe you will get to this later; I do think you should populate the Tree Commission again and have it work towards these types of goals so that we could put a vision together.

Councilperson Veverka said well it goes along with that with the variety of species because we know that on Midland for instance, we planted all those beautiful Ash trees; and then they had to take them all out. So, we have to be attentive to the fact that the different species can be affected, and you don't want to wipe out the whole wonderful area.

Mayor Kurtz said as a matter of fact, let's just move further south, let's go to the Hemlock property. I just say Hemlock property because we own 114 acres; and so there was proposed at one time several years ago a winery on our property at the eastern end of Hemlock. What I am suggesting is let's think out of the box for a minute. Let's talk in terms of a horticultural center, a greenhouse, a growing area. We can do something where we become self-sustaining in terms of trees, repopulating our own tree program; and we can do some really neat things. I throw this out just for a what if. We had some fun when we were putting this together, Coral and I talked about winery, and let's call it the minery. Could you imagine a winery down at the bottom where the old mine was. It would be unique. You can take a train, a trolley from the train to get up into it.

Councilperson Trakas said I love that.

Mayor Kurtz said you have to have a vision, you have to have a dream.

Councilperson Trakas said you could have like blackberries, you can grow all sorts of different things that people can come off the train and pick. That would be fun.

Mayor Kurtz said I am hoping that, I think the DiGeronimos have six or seven years to do something with that property to meet the West Creek requirements, or whatever they have to do, I am hoping that maybe we can talk them into on our property help us re-contour to be able to do something like a horticultural center. We could work with the career center, and our resources to create something for students to learn. There would be an education component, but also a functional component for our community; and so the Hemlock property would offer this opportunity if we so choose to invest in that opportunity. You know the Hemlock Trail, we are looking at bathrooms, and also vandalism is already taking place. Somebody threw one of the picnic tables into the creek over the Hemlock bridge. It's just silliness. So, we often have to be mindful of safety, even the resources. You never would think we would have that type of problem. It is unfortunate, but it's real. So, we will address these differently, but the safety even on the Hemlock Trail; and some of the issues that people have brought to my attention, we will address them. This is just another opportunity to play what if in the Hemlock Road.

Continuing south with Hillside Road. There are two projects that I would like to advance this year; and they both deal with safety. Councilperson Veverka and I know firsthand the safety concerns on Hillside Road; and as Dale told me, the only time you want to go on a bike on Hillside Road is on Sunday I believe because it's the only safe day, even if that's considered safe. If you look at the potential road, as was committed to on Brookside which we will talk about in a minute, going with sidewalks from Lake Charles to the existing sidewalks. This would be sidewalks from Twin Creeks to the existing sidewalks; and in the process of developing a plan for sidewalks, there are two things that as I drove that area that need to be addressed, to get the residents to embrace this. One is what infrastructure components need to be addressed as part of the sidewalk program? Are there drainage issues that need to be addressed that we can incorporate into a larger project to not just put sidewalks in but also address some of the concerns for safety and like drainage and things like that and water lines, etc. Also, turnaround driveways, we are going to have to be flexible allowing more people to have turnaround driveways so you are not backing out into traffic, you are actually pulling into traffic.

So, these are all components of more vibrant sidewalk component which is a benefit and for the safety of the residents if you are going to continue to embrace the walkability; and this again complements that strategy. The same thing on the west side, between Hawthorne Trace and the existing sidewalks by South Great Oaks; they made a recommendation to put the remaining 13 or 16 houses off of South Great Oaks, but also the sidewalks in that area, to tie that together from a safety perspective. There's also a water main that needs to be addressed in that area. So, instead of trying to wait for one big project for water mains, I am talking to Don about engineering the water main construction as part of the sidewalk project, at least to get us to I-77. So, we get that done, and whenever we get the safety component of the sidewalks; and not only introduced, but actually built. We are trying to use a layered approach to some of these potential projects by addressing infrastructure, safety as well as function in these areas.

Moving further south, if you go south, there's a little teaser for a second which we will come back to later. I just want to show you, there's Selig, and that's the potential for beautification of

Selig because we have to upgrade the entire community. You are saying, what are these pictures? Well that's a picture of a high tension tower, south of Hillside, under the high tension towers. You guys have driven that hundreds of times, never probably looked at it from this perspective; but the high tension tower on the left. There are two towers on the right, and the one on the left is looking east on Brecksville Road; and that tower on the left which abuts the primary property is dead. It has been dead for decades, and I have talked to some people about the possibility of maybe we can eliminate that. Then the picture on the right would be replacing it. That happens to be our property. Does anybody know where that's at?

Councilperson Veverka said the Cavs' facility.

Mayor Kurtz said that's the Cavs' facility. So, imagine that road right there where that tower is going back into the primary school property. Enough on that right now. We will come back to that.

Brookside, we have the projects on Brookside taking place. Again, similar to Lafayette; we have pavement, sidewalks in the Bramley area, drainage, landscaping, potential tree replacement, cleaning out. We have to work with the homeowners, look at the homeowners to improve their property once we improve our property. That is a major undertaking east of Brecksville Road, but also west of Brecksville Road. There's a meeting on Monday night with the people on Brookside between Eastview and Lake Charles to address the logistics of that project. There is also a storm sewer. Don, do you want to talk about that.

City Engineer Ramm said yeah, major storm sewer improvements on that project. We had some complications with where we wanted to put it initially relative to the existing gas mains. So, the open corridor that we selected to put that storm sewer is in the one pavement lane and along the edge of the pavement. So, we will be starting that project on the 20th. The meeting on this coming Monday will explain the parameters and schedule for that work; but we need to get going with the underground, and it's conducive to this sort of weather. You see DiGioia Suburban putting in storm sewers down on lower Brookside. They have been working all through the winter, and that really helps us condense and keep that overall construction schedule into one nice long season. A lot of times we are hemmed up in starting in the spring to try and get done before Thanksgiving and that. Sometimes they can't accommodate a big project and millions of dollars. So, we are trying to get going early on this project on upper Brookside; and the Phase 2 going to Sprague, we would like to incorporate that into the same one construction season.

Mayor Kurtz said so we have some challenges. Lake Charles will just have to go to Sprague. We will have one-way traffic from Eastview to Lake Charles; and we talked to the schools and buses and we are working to make sure the snow plows, and we are going to inconvenience the residents as little as possible. We have that meeting to let them know that there will be some problems, there will be some challenges; but we will get through them by working together. We will address them on a timely basis, their concerns. Suffice to say, we want to get that going, and we are moving some of the infrastructure around to make it more, make sense long term. We will have a meeting on that Monday, and then we will begin on that project as soon as possible.

Again, all these projects we will be able to really look, we are going to invest millions of dollars in these areas; and the finished project is going to be phenomenal in terms of we are going to enhance our safety, our appearance in terms of the infrastructure. What does that mean? That means the homeowners. The homeowners should be able to, and we should expect them to improve their property because we are spending a lot of money improving the City's. Working together we will continue to do that.

Moving further south, Brettin. Again, it's a mostly completed project. There is a chamber to be installed in the spring likely. We are coming up with a modified possible way of managing that. So, we are looking at different logistical components to make it less obtrusive to the neighborhood. Suffice to say, in the spring we will talk about manicuring the landscaping. We roughed everything in. Now we are manicuring. The tree program, that would be a perfect example of things we can do beyond the right-of-way to do something that is long term in benefit of the neighborhoods. We could put trees on the property that we know won't be interfered with utility lines, and that can be something that would be an enhancement to the neighborhood long term. Again, we will also get the homeowners to upgrade through community pride efforts, neighborhood improvements and neighborhood communication. At least that's the goal.

Going a little further south to the end of the City and go to Cascade Creek; and again two things about Cascade Creek. One, I worked that area, and as I became more familiar with it, it's really a nice subdivision. They did a nice job of putting it together. People are happy there, but I think it's time after the last decade to make that part of the City's streets. We will see the logistics, but the pavement is in good shape. Everything is in good shape, and I think we ought to just dedicate that road. It is not dedicated, and we do all the services as it is. In a trade off, we need to get some right-of-way for identifying the community as we come into the City with identifiers, enhancements and safety. There are a few things that need to be addressed along that line. That's not for today obviously.

It's one of those chapters. All of these are chapters to fill in the book. All I am trying to do here today is say think about these things, and as we put more information together we will bring them to Council to address them as a group and see what Council thinks.

Councilperson Trakas asked as we talked about Cascade Creek, can you consider Meadowbrook as well? Both of them are non-conforming streets. They never can conform, they are too small; but that's a mess. We were talking about trying to get that paved.

Mayor Kurtz said we will make a note of that because that's another example of how we can do something, bring it into the fold, and we maintain everything now. So, again, good point. That's well taken. We will manage that too.

So, that takes us through that part of the journey, and then the signage, the identifying Independence in the southern tier as I mentioned earlier, being the catalyst, the magnet, the glue

of all these communities whether it be Broadview Heights or Brecksville now. So, the same type of concept of identifying Independence.

Now I want to turn to the campus, and again as we drive into the campus there are always possibilities to enhance our image to make sure we are a premier community.

Again, this drone shot identifies from the City Hall the overflow parking area. This is right at the bottom part of the stream, the Kathy Lynn and Selig interchange. That could be modified, and I talked to Chief Rega about making it a roundabout concept for safety reasons; and that's something we are going to look at. They have done it in Akron in a couple of spots. It really works more efficiently than traditional stop and go.

Councilperson Trakas said I had a bad accident in one of those once, so I am always against those things.

Mayor Kurtz said well okay.

As you see the flavor of the entire campus, it shows you I-77. It shows you what we have done because of our forefathers' ability to buy properties to invest for future generations. It shows some of the opportunities that we have sitting in front of us. Again, the Civic Center, would you believe that in two years it will be 30 years old. Now we are meeting with the departments, and we are going to talk about 5, 10 and 20 year plans. The Civic Center is the heart of our community. It needs a facelift; it needs to be expanded. We need to increase our services and serviceability. We just applied, thanks to Jim's efforts, we applied for a kitchen upgrade grant; and things of that magnitude need to be addressed. We will meet with the Rec Department, Community Services, the library, Council, the school leadership and take full advantage of the breath of opportunities on this campus. So, we will plan for the future. We will incorporate technology. We will look to upgrading to meet our needs, the request of today's population, but also the changing demographics. We need to make sure that we take a holistic approach to playing what if in this important component of our community.

So, the last area I want to discuss and probably leads to the most significant opportunity in change, in both physical and functional of our community. The picture of what you see today is our campus; but moving, and it deals with moving the elementary school to the campus. I will defer to law enforcement officials when they say it will be safer on the campus. We heard that. The question I really have to ask and have answered, not today necessarily is are you willing to accept the concept of an enhanced one education campus because this group right here really they are the decision makers. They will determine if that's really how they want to look at it. My answer would be maybe, but under what conditions? I would consider it, but under what conditions and what understandings?

I went through all the information I compiled over the last six months and the raw components that resonated with the residents were location, safety concerns, traffic and impact on the area. I went through the information.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz asked if this Council is willing to participate in moving the elementary school to the campus; and if the answer is well, my answer would be it depends on what conditions. If I am a Council member, I would say I would consider it but under what conditions and what is the understanding? What are we going to get?

I went through all my information that I compiled over the past six months, and the raw components of that are funding, location, safety, traffic and the impact on the area, this campus. So, the question that you have to ask yourself is why should the City be involved? Why? Because we are the umbrella of the community; the schools are our component. We are the umbrella, and so over the past century and listening to my uncle and former Mayor, the last century it was schools, your authority ends at the schools. Your authority ends when you walk in the schools. So, it was very clear the delineation of authorities; and that's how they modeled themselves. So, that's how they worked together, and we had great relationships. That was the model of the past century.

Now this century, it's more comprehensive. There is an overlap. There is this community engagement, and the best example of that is the Shared Use facility. Now the question is, I am not sure we can share the primary school; but creatively there may be some social components to doing something together. Suffice to say, it's a primary school. Today we have to look at the global approach to this, and funding is the most discussed aspect of building a new primary school. One position is to go to the ballot, and like last fall and fully fund it. That is a traditional funding situation. The other one is funding through inside millage, One Independence. So, those are the bookends of possibilities, and you need to look at them. Again, we have to look at every component. I am not judging either one of them; I am saying that today I believe, I am an advocate for a hybrid approach.

In 1999 we funded a primary school addition, and we did it through a mechanism of property money; and we were able to give \$2 million plus dollars to the schools. We built the addition on the primary school. We got the land for the Shared Use facility. The land component I would say is cosmetic, but it's a function to achieve an end; but it's the City's title or the school's title. You know what, it's the community's title as far as I am concerned. That's what we did. I want to re-introduce that concept as a possibility of playing what if. So, I know that concept works. It worked, and we have history to prove it worked; and so how do I see the concept playing today? It begins with a joint discussion of a new primary school, the location, the layout. I think one of the things we got short on was people in Independence want to see visual aids. They want to see this. They want to know what this is for. Well, I will tell you what this is for. So, the primary school or whatever it is, they want to see the physical layout of it. They want to see what their investment is. So, I think there's where we can do better. They confirm that there is a safety component that's enhanced, and they will understand that. I would rely on the school leadership, the experts, to discuss, debate and reach a consensus with the City and the community because

ultimately the community has to buy into this and ultimately go to the ballot and have them embrace it as a community. The visual aids are so important.

The City would need to support the concept, the layout, and the infrastructure. The infrastructure is vitally important because the people south on Archwood, they don't want to hear about more traffic. They don't want to hear about it, and they shouldn't; but because of what we can do on Selig and because of what we can do on Kathy Lynn, we have experienced when we have events, most of the traffic goes to Selig. We can enhance that and ensure that the people who are affected by traffic on the south of the campus aren't going to be further challenged by us bringing more traffic to that area; when in fact we are going to be able to build infrastructure to complement that and help eliminate the traffic by making it easier to get out onto Selig Road and go north or south. I think it's important that we talk about utilities. It's important that we talk about safety, about traffic; but the other component that people lose sight of is the home values, the sustainability of the community and the ability for us to attract new residents. The ability for us to retain residents, and we can do all of that if we work together. I think that the City should purchase the Hillside site. The visual aid of the Cavs' road and the tower; you come off of 21 with an entrance just like we did at the Cavs because we own that road. We own that facility. Imagine where that left tower is. Imagine that, and when you drive onto to 21 right there, there's no residents to affect. So, you are not affecting any residents. You are on a State route. You go to the property itself, and then you build a state-of-the-art indoor Service garage. Now somebody mentioned something like that at this table this morning about it, about taking our equipment, about our equipment leaving it outside. When you are putting millions of dollars of equipment and leaving it outside in these conditions, trust me when you try to start up a diesel truck; you are not helping that engine and the transmission. So, Westlake has one; and it's 12 years old today, but I would say a state-of-the-art Service garage, indoor Service garage as Chief Rega said we could repair stuff, not only Service trucks but the pumpers, clean bays. Everything would be inside the building, and then, I haven't researched this; I put a big asterisk actually, we would look at retrofitting the addition that was put on the primary school as the offices, training facility, work area for the Service Department employees. So, that campus could be and modify everything to the west of the property as everything would be done west of the property, on the west end of the property.

Hillside Road would then be cut off except for safety vehicles, for snow plowing, for access right onto Hillside Road to make sure that they weren't short changed with respect to services. I know you are directly affected by that Roger.

Resident Roger Lesh said directly affected by what you are talking about.

Mayor Kurtz said absolutely.

Mr. Lesh said I don't think you would want diesel trucks starting next door to you either. You are changing a residential area, it's a totally different area for a garage.

Mayor Kurtz said Roger, hold on, hold your thought. There will be a lot of time for debate. This is not the forum for the debate. I anticipated that, so that's why I said west of the existing facility, not east; and we will find a way to manage the site with a futuristic tone, being sensitive to the residents. Suffice to say, if we are willing to explore that possibility, it opens up the Service property then to do a couple of different things. The traffic would no longer be on Selig. It would be on Brecksville Road. We would also look at taking the Service garage, anyway Selig splits the Service Department as we have it today. It is an end of the road; so we split that existing road. Now we could put the emergency access ramp onto I-77. The north side of the area on the north end of the screen would be part of the Recreation Department and be tied into walkable. There are opportunities for future generations, future leaders to do what we had the privilege and the opportunity to do by having that land available. The south end, the existing Service garage, would be potentially retrofitted to the Administration building. The Superintendent's office, we could retrofit that, and the bus depot if necessary.

The south side would be on the campus of the school, the municipal campus; so retrofit the building for Administration use and for the bus depot on the south side. The north side would be retrofitted for future uses by future Councils and leaders. Then we put potentially a bridge by the Stanley Skoczen stadium all the way to the Civic Center for safety reasons. We could have children of all ages being able to walk. There would be some type of an access point so you are not crossing the road; and so these are all opportunities, and it's time that we look at them. We see if there's an appetite to embrace them or some modified version of them. I am just throwing out the concept. Ultimately, the School Board, the Superintendent, and this body right here will weigh in on what we really want to do for the next generation, the next several generations. It's an investment by the stakeholders, the schools and the City that would be confirmed by the voters. It would ensure community stability, home values, new opportunities for the schools. It would be a community attraction for the campus. We would continue to look into upgrading the entire campus for services, serviceability and how we integrate the next generation of students into the community population being our resources such as the Civic Center. You have to reinforce to the community that education is a priority. It's a priority for the City. It's a priority for the schools, the leadership; and that we are not sitting silent or sitting dormant on this issue, but we are imagining all the possibilities. I believe this hybrid approach to funding our future and warrants further discussion and debate.

In conclusion, I really appreciate Dave and Council. I appreciate your giving me the time and attention, allowing me the opportunity to share in my vision. It is your strategic planning session, but by inviting me Dave, I really do appreciate it. You can see that this wasn't just hatched overnight, but this has been a long time in the making in terms of the City of Independence becoming the beacon of the southern tier and being a beacon and a catalyst to creating unity among communities and unity between schools and the City. I just ask you to look at the bookends in the raw form that I defined today; and I ask you to take the time over the next couple of years that maybe we can fill in those chapters in the book and create something that we can pass down to future generations, whether it's school or City, it's community. We can do that collectively together, and if we do that, we will have a community that's more

livable, more sustainable, and we have addressed the issues of the downtown, safety, the appearance and the high priority of education.

So, again thank you for inviting me. Thank you for the privilege of being here, and I look forward to a robust couple of years of working together and smoothing out some of the bumps; but in essence working to enhance the quality of life for the people of Independence, the residents. Thank you very much.

Everyone applauded.

Dr. Asseff asked may I ask a question?

Vice Mayor Grendel said we will take a couple of questions, and then we will take a 15 minute break.

Mayor Kurtz said I was going to split it up, I apologize.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we will come back with maybe some specifics we can talk about before noon.

Mayor Kurtz asked do you want to take a break now and come back?

Dr. Asseff said one thing you missed on moving the primary school.

Mayor Kurtz asked just one?

Several people began speaking at once again.

Dr. Asseff said the use of the property once the new primary school is built, the old property, using it for housing. We need land for housing, and that would be ideal to build downsized housing for people who want to retain their place in Independence versus making this an annex of the Service garage because I looked at it. There's more value for housing than the other thing you are talking about.

Mayor Kurtz said well if I may answer. I appreciate the perspective, and everyone is going to have their unique perspective; and we blend that together to create a mosaic that's really good for the City. I will say this, initially the first phase of housing, I am passionate about; and I am hoping Council will agree that it will be downtown, in the downtown area. We are talking \$275,000 to \$425,000. It's going to fit a segment of the community. Will we address all, you and I have had this discussion, will it address all the housing needs of our community? Absolutely not, but if we don't plant the seed, or put a stake in the ground with one new option; we have accomplished nothing. So, I am saying, let's this be the first stake.

Now the second stake, I am already working on. I will come to Council when I have something framed up, not too far away; but another opportunity for the City to be a lead in potential housing areas. That will be a different component, and I don't want to cloud this opportunity by talking about five other opportunities. I want to focus on one, and if Council says I agree with the direction, we will go in this direction. Then we will work something out, and we will start there. If they erase it and say that's not what we will do, we won't embrace; then I will retreat, and I will go to Plan B. What I have tried to outline now is a potential, comprehensive approach to this. I didn't do this in a vacuum. I did this with years of understanding the people who I represent and talking to the people I represent and looking at some of the mistakes we made over the years, some of the errors I made. Then finding ways, how do we make better decisions; and so all I am saying today is, these are the bookends the way I define them. The chapters in that book will be determined by this group of people right here for the next two years; and so all I am saying is I don't have, and here's the beauty of this right now for me to be perfectly frank. I believe everyone on this Council would want to work with me personally and professionally. There's no personal agenda; there's a professional agenda, and I embrace that. I am excited about it, and we may disagree on funding. We may disagree on how we are going to run the Service Department. We may disagree on the trees. We might disagree on how Dale and I are going to ride our bikes; but at the end of the day, that's okay to disagree if we come up with a better solution. To disagree and make it personal, or disagree just to fight, I am done with that. I am here because for two reasons; the people put me here and I am excited about the opportunity to work with this Council and School Board as long as we keep everything above the personal. We should do that. We are professionals. We are all mature professionals; and if we do that, we are going to have an exciting two years and beyond in my opinion. We will achieve what the people asked us to achieve. It may not be in the form of what our original concept was; or what we took to the people to vote on. It may not be in the form of how we are going to finance; but I am asking everybody today. I started out by being open minded, and if you are open minded and embrace these opportunities; I just want to see us do something for future generations. We could disagree on this. You know what, 50% of the people disagreed with me on the Civic Center too, and I proved over time that it was the right strategy. I am not looking for a comment, let me finish. I am not running this meeting; but I want to say this, just be open minded. Say hey why don't we take a ride, and why don't we talk about this. Why don't you give me a chance to share with you my ideas instead of just no. If we do that, we are going to have a lot of fun.

Mr. Lesh said as long as we both share each other's ideas.

Mayor Kurtz said absolutely. I want to hear because if we can move in a different direction; like I told you, these are the bookends guys. I am going to say it repeatedly, you will fill in the chapters. You will, not me. I tried to listen and hear what everybody said for the last six months. That's why I am saying, here's the range. Here's my hybrid; but if we have to move one way or the other, I am okay; as long as we do it as a group.

So, maybe a bathroom break.

Vice Mayor Grendel said maybe about a 15 minute break.

Mayor Kurtz said again, thank you.

A 15 minute break was taken and the meeting resumed at 10:45 a.m.

Vice Mayor Grendel said Mayor, thank you very much for that presentation. I thought this is a great way to start the term is to find out what your passion is, what your vision is; and this way Council as a group can decide if there are two or three things, or if there's something that we really want to focus on and maybe hit the ground running and everything instead of having to wait for months for something to develop.

The other thing too that Dale had brought up is maybe we can have another one of these sessions, maybe sometime in May, a follow up meeting and choose a couple of these items. To me now I think what would really peak my interest is your downtown vision. I think that's something that, I think especially the housing component. It might be conducive because what might be available, I don't know if the Concordia property would be available. It might be something for planning purposes because there are a lot of people, and you probably saw that and I think everybody saw that with the residents. We have lost at least four or five friends who have kids the same age as ours who have gone on to Medina, Brecksville, you name it, other places because they had this kind of housing available. We are not talking about condos or cheap housing, we are talking about smaller homes that they don't have to maintain. Of course they are lower in price because the footprint is lower of the property, and the bills on their house; but I think that's something, and in the downtown area too if we can fit in what we have ideas as far as any green space goes, what kind of amenities that they are going to be. I have had a number of people who have offices on Rockside, small businesses that say hey if something opened up in downtown Independence like a little building, we would put our office there, maybe a three or four person accounting firm. A smaller outfit, not the big ones; but they said that would be fantastic to have somewhere where you can go to eat. The parking would be, and the traffic would be less.

To me, I think, and it's just myself speaking; but I think that downtown working with you and the Administration on the downtown area makes a lot of sense.

As far as your vision for the schools, I know that they are going to the ballot in August I believe; and I think that we should maybe stand back and see how that goes. Let them do their campaigning because they came reasonably close the last time and everything. Then if that doesn't come to fruition, then go to Plan B and then start talks and then move on.

Mayor Kurtz asked can we have a conversation to, I think the schools would be open minded to a conversation now rather than wait to just go back on the ballot with something.

Councilperson Trakas said you need to do it together.

Vice Mayor Grendel said you need the money, unless they are willing to pull back on what they have said; but the last time, it kind of muddies the water when people, they saw Kenn's proposal and everything. So, then it really, it was kind of a confusing thing. There were competing ideas on that. Again, with your idea, I think it's very intriguing. I would definitely be open minded, but I would like to see if they have a chance. Like you said, maybe some suggestions to the campaign could be better made with actual visuals and illustrations. Let them give it their best shot because they put a lot of time and effort and money into it themselves; and again, if it comes to the same results, unless they are willing, I don't think they want to scrap it.

Mayor Kurtz said unless I am reading it wrong, what I suggested today is a concept I have had discussions with the Superintendent on because it's not just one ballot issue. There are more ballot issues in the next couple of years; so what I am trying to do is create a sustainable strategy that allows for the school, and allows for a PI and allows for a renewal because if you get a new school but you lose the renewal or the PI. I am trying to create a strategy where the people will see the benefits of a long term, thought out plan; and in my conversations with the Superintendent, I asked him if he would just measure what he says to anybody. I know it's been tough on him, and I didn't mean to put him in that position; but I thought the first group that needs to be introduced to this is City Council because if City Council doesn't embrace it, then all bets are off from that one and we will go to Plan B or C or D. He gave me the impression that he's excited about working with the City and coming up with a hybrid that is something that we can take to the people today rather than wait until after they do the same thing in August.

School Board President Lynne Laski said if we went back in March, we were going to do the same thing. We decided it was too soon with the School Board changing over and all those things. The idea of going back in August, there would be a tweak.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mrs. Laski said it would be to borrow more money, all kinds of things are changing if you go all the way to August.

Vice Mayor Grendel said Council will have to be kept in the loop.

Councilperson Trakas said that's why I think we can help design this together right.

Councilperson Veverka said well and the other piece though that might be a cautionary piece is the Service garage has gasoline tanks, has the potential for EPA remediation. We ran into a similar thing with the old Kuhn's property on Brecksville Road. It has just gotten the clearance to be able to have something go on there; and that's after the purchase 20 odd years ago.

So, there are a whole lot of other aspects. You can't just look at the surface. You have to be able to be aware of there is some underground considerations that you have to deal with.

Mayor Kurtz said the Service Department, to your question about a point. It's a point well taken, but the Service garage, for the buses we would use the same infrastructure we have. So, the fuel tanks would still be appropriate for their use. So, it's not, we are not abandoning or changing that.

I tell you what Dale, if we get to that point in the weeds, we are doing great because at that point, I tried to measure the discussion; but I tried to be sensitive to the two polarized positions of the existing levy, the way we did it and One Independence and trying to say okay now, wait a minute, and I listened to the presentation again, Kenn's presentation. Then I saw what happened with that, and I said hey wait a minute, we did something in 1999 and it's almost something. I call it a hybrid of it; but it's still, what the purpose of it was it used our funds to help the schools. So, that's the genesis of that discussion; and so, again my job is to present opportunities. Your job is to do the heavy lifting and make the decisions. My job is to make sure that I raise your comfort level where you are comfortable making those decisions, not necessarily 100% agreeing, but that you know what, I can live with it. With the Civic Center, Joe Kotabish was going to come out against it, and all I said was Joe just stay neutral on it; and we passed it by 32 votes.

As long as people in this forum, if we do something that isn't in concert with the schools; and we come up with a combined strategy to where we can all embrace this. I just want everybody to say we can support this or stay neutral on it because then the people will at least give it a fair shake. I am just sharing what I heard from the people, and my conversations with the schools, with the Superintendent. Now we will dig down into the weeds on some of these things, but right now I just think it's worth discussing. It doesn't polarize anybody.

Kenn, not to put you on the spot, would you be willing to embrace that at least, the concept for discussion?

Councilperson Synek said my only hope is that at some point we get a chance to discuss the issue and vet it.

Mayor Kurtz said that's all I want.

Councilperson Veverka said well and additional pieces that are hiding in the weeds is you have the existing Nike site area there. Okay, so if you are going to move transportation for the school system someplace else, that comes into a question; and then we have the Land Lab which is totally as far as what we have been told is off limits. The other area above the Land Lab then would no longer be used; then there are questions there.

Mayor Kurtz asked isn't it exciting though?

Councilperson Veverka said it is exciting.

Councilperson Trakas said it has to be put together before you.

Councilperson Veverka said there are so many additional aspects that are involved in a very complicated, sounds interesting plan; but there are lots and lots of aspects that are involved.

Mayor Kurtz asked do you know what I love? You are already thinking about it, and that's all I really wanted to do is stimulate the conversation and say hey if you guys think I am flat on my face; if you think that it warrants further discussion, and I can do something, those are the kind of questions that I am glad that you are thinking about. I am glad you are open minded to it Kenn. This is exciting to me because we have, and I have had conversations with the School Superintendent; so I think the Finance Director is going to be the biggest challenge.

Councilperson Trakas said another thing along these lines, and this is more long term; I wouldn't suggest muddying the waters this year. I do think that working with the school district, coming up with the opportunity to have a revenue source that is City generated into the future. If you look at all the discussion going on in the State, it's not helping people like Independence. They say we are rich. We have enough. They are taking away money. They have been taking away money every year; and now the latest proposal is they want to go and pool the money like we were fighting all those years ago and send it down to Columbus. You will never see a dollar. So, I really think that some type of a long term approach, we have a sale tax, income tax opportunity that are legal if we put them on the ballot at some point in time to have joint sharing. There's cost sharing where maybe we can share custodial staff. The City can help clean the buildings. Things like that which I think are tangible dollar and cents things that can help the schools operate and maintain their excellence because they are not going to be getting more money. They are going to be getting a lot less money.

Mayor Kurtz said this is exciting.

Councilperson Narduzzi said it just goes to show though without a plan, it's not going to work. Like if the School Board were to pass this issue, God forbid; there was no plan in effect. So, all these questions that are on the board now, nobody had answers to; and you have to react then. I would rather plan because you know what's going to happen rather than you accumulate this pile of money now. Now you have to disperse it. You have to do something with it. So, you have to build foolishly I think. I think you have to plan for what the future is going to be.

Councilperson Kapusta said I don't know that we should really think that they didn't have a plan.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I don't want to interrupt, but I just heard five questions at this table that they didn't have answers to.

Councilperson Kapusta said right because their plan wasn't going in this direction though. Think of that, this is the Mayor's plan.

Councilperson Narduzzi said well they still have the primary school, and they still had (inaudible).

Councilperson Kapusta said well I am just saying it wasn't going in that direction. I just think that maybe what you are reflecting Tom; and I am not disagreeing with you to an extent, so I think maybe what you are reflecting is that we the public, the voters didn't feel we had enough answers to some of those questions. I believe that the Board of Ed and the Administration had their thoughts, but I don't know that we all thought they hadn't communicated well enough to us. So, I will agree with part.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked so when does this go on the ballot if they get on the August one?

Mrs. Laski said we are looking at August right now.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked so when do you have to submit it to the Board of Elections?

Mrs. Laski said in April we would begin the process.

Vice Mayor Grendel said which means we should be having our meetings right now because there's some questions we had too is I believe Mayor you talked about just a new primary school. So, that means the middle school stays. Is that workable or not? We need to find out exactly what facility. Is there a way to save the auditorium there, a certain portion of that building that is still functional? I would hate to lose a great facility that we have there now. I don't know if that's enough time for us. We would definitely like to be in the planning.

Mayor Kurtz said I am going to rely on the Superintendent working with him to drill down. I just needed to see if this gets any traction because if it does then we can start drilling down. So, I am going to walk away from today saying okay we have some heavy lifting to do and start getting some answers to see if we want to reach that threshold where everybody is willing to connect to it.

Vice Mayor Grendel said because what I am trying to do is focus in on the wide spectrum that you presented to us, but now focus in on maybe two or three items because if you try to think we are going to get all this accomplished; we are going to get nothing accomplished.

I do like the downtown area, and we talked about too; you are going to be meeting Father Mullee. I think that the atmosphere now is that west side too, something can be done. I think there's some excitement generated among Council in that aspect too, the housing. So, I think I would like to focus on two or three big things that we can really start at the ground and work on; that being one, and of course the schools are eminent because of their needs and everything. Those two I think; some of those others will fall into place as far as for the campus here and as far as the Service Department, their needs and everything too.

The third one to me is Brecksville Road north because that's something, that train has already started; and we need to make sure that's part of everything. That's our big, we know that Don will take care of the residential, those things are handled. As far as the City is concerned, north of Brecksville Road to the Cloverleaf is so important for us to be on target. You presented some

options as far as Longano and Kleber; and we should take care of that area because that's eminent. We are doing work already there now.

Councilperson Veverka said and well the other piece that goes with that, I know in Streets & Sidewalks, and Dave you are there and other team members; but we have the issue then of right-of-way and when it came to where we could put the road, how big we could put the road, whether we could do a boulevard or what our constraints were related to the houses and so on. How far back to the drawing board potentially would we have to go because we are progressed quite a bit along that direction. Can you comment on that?

City Engineer Ramm said we didn't really look at the boulevard, that was never part of the things that we were looking at.

Councilperson Veverka said just looking at width, whether we have a full turn lane.

City Engineer Ramm said the turn lane we had to widen and taper back, and all the decorative lighting and the 8 foot path; that was all kind of part of the project in that very limited zone, at the new intersection. The rest of the project from Rockside Road to the Cloverleaf was going to pretty much stay in the same, but it wouldn't require right-of-way acquisition.

Vice Mayor Grendel said that area has been neglected for so long. I don't think nothing has changed since we lived there in the 1960's and everything.

Councilperson Trakas said I would also suggest that before we rush into doing things we get the residents back together and convene them and discuss this with them. I think they were very violated by what we did last time. We had a big confabulation; we had three big meetings with them; and we said we weren't going to do anything, and then we are commercializing that area.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we knew that was going to be commercialized.

Councilperson Trakas said well they didn't say that they wanted it to be commercialized.

Vice Mayor Grendel said most of the time if they were truthful to themselves, we knew back; they just knew that the way government goes and everything, nothing is going to get done for quite a while. We had meetings with them for the zoning. We met with them.

Councilperson Trakas said and they didn't want to change it.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we told them this is coming. They would either have to be pretty naïve not to think that this was coming. So, I mean to feel violated; I think what we wanted to do was protect them as much as we could. We wanted them to be part of the process of whether it be through zoning or ideas and that; but I think it's been so long since we have done anything from an infrastructure standpoint. This is our time to really clean that area up; and if we focus on nothing else. We owe it to those people, we owe it to the City to start getting that to be a viable

part of our City too. I think Mayor you probably agree because you talked to all of them down there.

Mayor Kurtz said I talked to Jeremy, and he shared with me some of the different concepts; and again, I am saying uncut diamond, north of Cloverleaf is a diamond in the rough. This is all about opportunity management and communicating; absolutely you are correct, but they want some comfort levels in the Longano area and the Kleber area. They are not going to be disenfranchised, moved out and cannibalized.

Councilperson Trakas said all of them are afraid.

Mayor Kurtz said that's why I say we buy that little lot, we make it a boulevard entrance, identify it. Kleber, we clean up the entrance to Kleber. Don and I had some conversation. We get ODOT to maybe widen that bridge as part of that reconstruction. Don, get that done please.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think the east side, we should be sensitive to the residents because there are very few rentals on that side. The west side has been (inaudible).

Mayor Kurtz said a different conversation with either side of the road, believe it or not. So, what I had learned, and when I am talking to residents in that area; and I also learned Jeremy has certain components that we can look at. I just think that we will communicate with them. We will do that. We will do meetings just to make sure that no one is left out; and that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

Councilperson Trakas said and I think, I don't live there, I think I can speak for a majority of the people because I spoke to a lot of those folks. They felt very much that we were just going to commercialize this area, and it didn't matter what they had to say. They got mad about that. I don't blame them. I think we said that this is going to get commercialized. They were saying we want it to be a residential neighborhood, and if you want to do zoning here and there, we could consider that; but they didn't want to see what we were doing. I think there is a lot of anger with people, and not just the rental people, but like the people across the street there. They see developers coming in and trying to take their houses, buy them from them; and they don't want to leave. They don't want to leave Independence. If they have a plan like you were talking about, Dave you guys had your house bought at one time.

Vice Mayor Grendel said 480 took our house away.

Councilperson Trakas said I think Mayor if you are coming to that, say hey look there are some things coming down the pike; but we have these ideas that we want to relocate you within the City. I think that creates a much higher comfort level than just the big, bad City is coming in and you are damned.

Mayor Kurtz said we need to have that conversation so I am not going out free lancing; but that I know that Council has said look on the east side let's be sensitive to the people because they are

homeowners, they are stakeholders. On the west side, they are rentals for the most part, and we can take a more aggressive approach to figuring out what we want to do on the west side. Ultimately, you have to give me direction. I will try to help influence that, but you have to tell me what you want, what you are comfortable with; and then I will follow through and get it done. The west side is in a different position than the east side, and we need to be sensitive to the east side because there will be residents on the east side. There will be isolated residents on the west side. The party that didn't want to leave when we did AAA; and Ron Latare has already told me he is not going; and so okay. No problem. We will work with you on that. Just like on Rockside, we didn't force anybody.

So, the same thing with this; there are so many opportunities to have the people embrace what we are going to do. Some of them are wanting to see the impact once the road opens up. It is hard to even visualize other than the construction, the impact because it's going to have an impact. Traffic is going to be, so I want to have some meetings to get everyone engaged. Then we will talk about, I will get with Jeremy; and we will come up with a strategy and come to Council and see what your comfort level is. Again, we will communicate. That will be a priority.

Councilperson Trakas said with respect with the center of town. It's exciting some of the ideas. I do think, I hope that we would use a significant portion of the City property for a public park type area or a beautification. We talked about gardens, statuary, making this public. So, I think that would be beneficial to what you are talking about to have that maybe in the front of that area; but I think when you have a center of town that's your community, just having a bunch of houses, that's nice. I think if you want that to be a central location where people can gather, and Dave was talking about, improving across the street. You have to have some of these amenities, and I do think that really beautification of that area, a lot of trees, statuary, fountains. We could really make something grand. I looked at, you travel to Germany all the time. Look at the gorgeous things they have. They have big public art. I think we can engage the community to be part of this process to help us design this type of thing. I really think that component would be a nice complement.

Mayor Kurtz said they also have the restaurants, the patios, the interaction with those green areas where there are activities. They have some office above them, and they have all kinds of people living there too.

Vice Mayor Grendel said a blend of like retail on Brecksville Road, and then the green space and then the houses. So, you have a little buffer.

Mayor Kurtz said as I said today, I look at blending the two concepts that have unfolded over the past decade; and I think some hybrid of that is really a potential solution.

Councilperson Veverka said with the work we did with the group that explored the streetscape and the green space; one of the ways of utilization related to the green space was an amphitheater and having some sorts of events go on there. Lots of different surrounding communities have green space areas where they do activities and things that will bring people in; and when you

combine it with what Jim is saying, the best utilization of that green space, that's the big magnet potentially to pull lots of things on. Putting some of the development in the area as you work with St. Michael's; I know that they have indicated a willingness. We can work some of the more business community issues on the west side, and then play off of the east side, the amphitheater, the splash park, the other things there. We saved the old school entranceway. It's one potential feature of the area, and we did spend the money. We did have a number of meetings with the people, and the other piece with the green space. We have been setting aside money for the streetscape, improving the appearance through the center of town so it becomes a more attractive piece. So, we don't want to get too far off of that plan which we were on before.

Councilperson Kapusta said I also believe though that we had differing opinions even before about it; and that I was one of the ones who thought that the housing was a critical component for it. I remember Councilperson Wagner saying that land is far too valuable to use for 20 or 40 homes. I took issue with that because I think our people are what we need to invest in too. I concur that we need to have a component of green space; and I think we also have a significant component of green space down by the gazebo that goes totally unused. So, maybe what we do is as we are putting in our streetscape money; we put in some of it to renew that area and to use that as a component and then we don't need to take as much of the middle school for it. That's my thoughts.

Vice Mayor Grendel said one area, and what your feelings are Mayor on it is that we talked about burying the utilities like we did on Rockside. From an aesthetic standpoint, you notice a lot of the downtowns like Hudson, everything is buried underground; and that's a big component too. It's a big expense, a huge expense, but if you have everything underground; you don't have to worry about a wind storm or things of that nature. I know it's a big investment, but you are talking about probably 100 year investment anyways.

Mayor Kurtz said that's exactly right.

Vice Mayor Grendel said so that's something we have to think about, do we want to beautify that area, at least from the top of the hill. I think we talked about maybe from where to at least maybe through the square area. If we do that, it really opens up a beautiful campus.

Mayor Kurtz said well EGD they are a great resource. They did the landscape design, and I have nothing but the utmost respect for them as professionals; and that's why I said that we were going to blend the two together, different concepts that we put together over the past decade or so. Blending those together gets a little bit of everything. That is my goal, and so to hear the conversation, I am more convinced that we have an opportunity there.

Councilperson Synek said a comment and question for the Mayor about your proposal; but as the new guy at the table, it's a blessing and curse, I am not familiar with all these details of what's going on with the northwest, northeast quadrant and all the residents have said and all those particular nuances of the policies that you are all familiar with. So, obviously I need to get up to speed on those things; but it's also a sort of blessing that I come with a fresh perspective and a

clean slate. As I prepared for this meeting and to step into this role, I spent a fair amount of time just in my own head thinking about strategy because that's all I know at this point. I thank you for all the ways you made me so welcome during this transition from the election til today. I look forward just to getting to work with you and learn more and more.

So, what I have thought about strategic planning, strategy, call it New Year's resolutions; but I have spent some time thinking about what is my role, is the role of our City government? What are we here to do and why? So, Mayor your proposal told us a lot about the whats, and it's a very concrete and a very exciting things, tangible things that are either going to happen or not. I think a strategy, can we go back to the why with some of these things? What is our overriding strategy or goal? Why do we want to do these things? What is our guiding principle as to the why?

Mayor Kurtz asked are you asking me?

Councilperson Synek said I am. What is the why behind all of these?

Mayor Kurtz said what are you functionally asking me because why are we doing this? Why philosophically because we are supposed to enhance the quality of life for the people who we represent. Functionally, we are supposed to enhance the quality of life for the people we represent. How do we do that? We do that through primary services such as picking up garbage and plowing streets and making sure that you are safe; and once we get beyond that core value or core expectation of quality of life, then we begin to a more robust discussion of land use, future opportunities, economic development strategy. What do we want to be when we grow up? I look historically at some of the decisions that were made and the tough decisions that were made by our predecessors. This right here, they made that decision without going to the ballot, and it was a tough decision. There was a lot of blow back; not to the point that it was ever impeded, but there was just groveling. Pete's Palace, and I was here so I know some of the comments and disappointment of people's attitudes about this. It happened with the Civic Center, the same thing.

So, my whole point is why are we doing this? Why? I believe it is our responsibility because we were elected by the people. We are the voice of the people of Independence, our constituents; and we have these meetings because there are enough people, enough brain power to debate, discern and ultimately make decisions. The shame is when we don't make decisions because I made decisions in hiring people. I have made mistakes of hiring people; but to go back to why, why are we here? First of all, we are stewards of the people's resources and their money. So, specifically Council; it's your responsibility as I outlined initially to determine use of land and the resources that we have purchased over the years. It is also your responsibility to tell me how I can spend the money. I will tell you how I want to, but you have to approve how I spend it. So, to why are we here? To have a more robust discussion in terms of making sure that the services are at the highest level, and make sure that the money is managed properly. I think that's probably the highest responsibility of Council, managing the money and our assets. You

just tell me how you want me to do it, but my job is also I think to tell you how I think we should do it. Does that make sense?

Councilperson Synek said it makes a lot of sense. As I have asked myself that question and tried to research; and there's a lot of people out there. Eventually, somehow I went back to the Federalist Papers which will be 232 years ago these documents were written as the Constitution was being ratified. I pondered this question, and it led me back to Federalist 45, and Federalist 45 was written by James Madison and it talked about the essential function of government. It boils down to promoting the happiness of the people, and I think as the new guy being here; I totally respect you. You all have tremendous experience in this, and I think it's important for all of us to remember as we go about talking about these things; that your experience also has to be (inaudible) back to how we make the people happy. Because of your experience, you are so quickly able to jump to the conclusion without bringing the general residents along with you. I think if we maintain a focus on why are we doing this? It's for the residents, it's for the people; and these plans and discussions and always remember that we are here to serve the residents, that too will change the dynamic of our City, our government. It's not just about getting stuff done. We also have to remember why we are doing it, and I am just the new guy here. I am just sharing with you my observations, but let's not forget about the why as we go about these things.

I am particularly passionate about the One Independence plan and our schools; and when I think about the why and serving people, we have an opportunity here to do something tremendous for the people of Independence. Respectfully to all the economic development and things like that, but that's not directly impactful on the lives of the people who live here. I feel like I am here to service them. I share that with you in terms of trying to set priorities and things like that; that is something that affects our residents deeply. In that regard, it deserves a high priority in my opinion.

Mayor Kurtz said I guess what we are on the same page because like Madison said, happiness. I say well I define happiness as quality of life.

Vice Mayor Grendel said and that's why we have been so pro-active with infrastructure in the last few years is because that's an important part. A lot of our infrastructure is dated, it's old, and we need to be pro-active. Some of these things we waited, like Lafayette; it's been on the books for a long time, but we have been doing a program where we can have very good roads, very good sewer systems so that the people. That's part of their enhancement of their lives to have just our daily services and to be functional and to not have water line breaks all the time and different things that aggravate your day-to-day living.

The other thing too is that we spend a lot time, and Doc has always mentioned, we have two different constituencies; we have the residents who live here, and we have the employers and businesses on Rockside that we need to also take care of because they are the ones who provide the funds that allow us to provide the excellent services to the residents. So, you have to keep that in mind. If that deteriorates, if businesses start moving out of town, and things all of a sudden our revenue stream is; so that's why you are constantly looking, you can't if you are just

standing still in any of these areas, you are falling behind because other communities are being pro-active and are really being forward thinking. So, you kind of borrow things from other communities. That's why I think Mayor the fourth area is that northwest quadrant. Doc mentioned that we should be definitely working with Seven Hills so we are not competing with what they are doing with Fairmount. We could be helping each other out, but it's a constant. I know what you mean as far as that's one aspect is the schools and the funding; but there's a multitude of things that we have to think about that we have to keep forward and not letting things deteriorate because you just slip up for a short period of time.

That's why I was impressed that during the time we had the recession, we were able to keep services at a high level and keep the operating expenses steady and everything. That's the big thing, you have to be constantly on our toes because what happens worldwide could affect us here locally.

Councilperson Kapusta said I would concur with Dave, and we can't look at, nor do we ever have the opportunity, do we ever have the luxury of looking at anything unilaterally. You heard the scope of Mayor's presentation today, and it's from here to here. So, we have to bite off little pieces. We set our priorities of course, but we have to bite off little pieces. We have to go back what is happening on the northern part of town, and what do we need to access if we pick up some of these things.

The economic development piece, it has to be just as important because that's what fuels us, that's what gives us the money to do these things. As Dave is saying, if the former people who sat here before us hadn't positioned the City well enough before that major recession, I don't know how we would have come through it. So, respect what you are asking Kenn as far as priorities, and I do always, and I will always have an involvement, as Dave and you yourself all sat as former Board of Education members, that the primary responsibility will always rest with our Board of Education. We will support them, we will supplement; we will offer what we can to them, but I do not think in any way, shape or form we ever want to be seen as supplanting what they are doing. We supplement, not supplant. So, we walk a tight rope, I guess is what I am saying. We juggle all the time.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I am thankful the appointment you made when you appointed Jeremy Rowan to the head of Economic Development years ago. He's been a tremendous asset, and Doc can attest to that. I think he is adjustable too, depending on who is in the Mayor's office. Jeremy is intelligent enough. He knows the different businesses and the movers and shakers; and I think he is a tremendous asset for us to build upon. I am hoping that he continues to be with us. I might be speaking out of hand, I am speaking from the heart there because he has worked tremendously with this Council and has been able to move in the direction that leadership wants us to move in.

Mayor Kurtz said and I just touched upon leadership, it's going from where you are at with leadership to where you want to be. So, all I tried to do today is give you a mosaic of where the potential is, and then we realistically can achieve a lot of these things. Leadership is moving the

organization from where it is to where it can reach its potential. That's what I am trying to make sure that I push so that you can make decisions, and we can embrace decisions and then measure decisions.

Vice Mayor Grendel said and you brought up a good point too because we have an able body here, and I think I can speak for all of us, that we are more interesting in accomplishing things, getting to those goals and not having bickering between the members. You are against this, so I am going to hold that against you. That's to me, we are all friends, we are all on the same board, moving in the same direction. If we have disagreements, they are here; but when we go outside, we are friends. We are not starting anything.

Mayor Kurtz said my job is to convince you to do something; but you have to be willing to give me a chance to convince you.

Vice Mayor Grendel said keep an open mind, but I think judging from what you have, there are four areas here that I think we should, the school as being one of the most pressing because of what their timetable is. The downtown area because that's something that, if we are not doing anything on it, it's falling behind; I think we should again get some synergy and get things moving in that direction.

Councilperson Trakas said and maybe what we do on that side of the street spurs the other side.

Vice Mayor Grendel said sure. It might just be instrumental, but at least something in that area. Then of course the Brecksville Road, north of Rockside I think is important because of what's already started there. We can't delay anything on that.

Then the last one is because of what's Seven Hills is doing on their side with Fairmount, that we should be ever vigilant with our northwest quadrant and make sure we are working in conjunction with them, supportive of them and also supporting our own interests and maybe seeing if they are going in one direction, complementing that.

Councilperson Kapusta said to that point too Mayor, I think that, I know myself, and I think the rest of us might appreciate an update with what is not happening there with IRG.

Mayor Kurtz said once I get that, you will get that.

Councilperson Kapusta said good. That's great. That would be helpful.

Mayor Kurtz said it's day eleven, and we are hitting the ground running.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Vice Mayor Grendel said the information, like I said, I wasn't aware that the schools were tinkering with that. So, that we are fully informed so that we know what's going on, whether it be in Executive Session or, so we are on board so we know what you know.

Mayor Kurtz said and we met with the Superintendent, Vern and I met with the Superintendent; and I asked him, I said look, would you be respectful and not mention anything, not to be disrespectful but until I talk to Council at least. He said absolutely because you are my priority. I understand my priority, and that's City Council. So, he respectfully did, and now we can move forward; but Dave you just outlined four of your high priorities. Is anybody else in a position to share with me?

Vice Mayor Grendel said I am just throwing those out, and then if Council, feel free to.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I have those things, I think I have them written down here; and then one other one would be land acquisition because without buying some land or holding on to this land; some of these opportunities won't be, they could pass us by. I look right next door at the Londrico property, and I know we looked at it four years ago. It's still available, but it could have a possible, be a great possible asset to the City. It could slip us by. Laverne Custer's property, I don't know if we have anything in writing to acquire that land; but we own that little flag shape to the south of that. That's another piece of property, it should belong to the City.

Councilperson Trakas said Laverne didn't want to have a conversation about it.

Mayor Kurtz said you are right. I will make that as a priority. I will put a list together of all of those opportunities, but I would like to present those to Council in an Executive Session because they are sensitive and legal and land acquisition issues that we are working on. I would just assume talk to you because also you have to make that decision, but it's not publication for this point. It's more of a negotiating situation. I will put that list together. I feathered some of them, and I hesitated with others.

Vice Mayor Grendel said that's why we didn't say anything because we know it's a sensitive matter.

Councilperson Veverka said and there's specific pieces of land, for example, the sliver in the center of town which would square up the property to potentially be useful or looking at a piece of property adjacent to the City property makes a lot of sense; but I think we have to be sensitive to the fact that just buying property because it's there and there's potential, that kind of eliminates the possibility of someone else coming in with a proposal to make something work and keep it in the tax valuation because when we buy property, that has a distinctive effect on the schools because it takes it out of their ballpark and now it becomes.

Mayor Kurtz said only if we use it for a non-profit use. For example, we own the Cavs' facility; and that's taxable. It is a taxable event because it's not used for a non-profit or for municipal purposes. So, I will continue to look at strategies where even if we buy a property and lease it somebody like we did the Cavs, it's a taxable event. When I talk about buying properties, your

buying properties for current use, for future generations' use, or to convert over to immediate use by a developer or someone that is a taxable event. University Circle, when we went there, they are the largest landowner over in that area, and they rent all the property out. So, they create a cash position out of it by utilizing that asset. Even downtown, I wouldn't be adverse to taking our asset and converting it into some other use to where we can attract somebody there to use that property and lease it to them; for two reasons I would look at that. One is if there's a problem, we still have some say so in the matter; and if we can make money with that money, then it becomes a business deal.

Going back to each of you saying what's on your mind, your priorities.

Councilperson Trakas said (inaudible) Dave, I appreciate you bringing that up. Several points, and they all kind of revolve around this discussion. I have always been concerned about the City dictating who the people are who are going to develop these things. We have a deal with somebody. All these developers come in, and their deal is they are going to use somebody else's money to make a ton of money. I hope that what we do in the future is put these up in some type of auction setting where we can pick and choose the best deals for the people of Independence. I just look at what people like Fairmount. We sat in this room, and it was like our business model is that we are using tax dollars. Well that's not the taxpayers' business model to be making you wealthy. I really hope that we would consider when we do these types of things to get a good, public discussion about who these folks are, what their backgrounds are, what the benefits are, what the finances are. Have a public discussion about that so that we can make decisions based, not on one person who we select; but on the best possible outcome for the people of Independence. On the housing part of it, you have a lot of people who build houses. There were a lot of people who could have come here and had good ideas. We just had that one fellow. I just think that having a diversity of thought really helps us to make those types of decisions.

The second part of it Mayor was something that you talked extensively about. You appointed yourself as Safety Director? Are you Safety Director for the City?

Mayor Kurtz said well by Charter.

Councilperson Trakas said so I just, a couple of things, just observations, I know you made safety a big part of what you wanted to accomplish in the next four years; and I think the people embrace that. One concept that I think we should consider going back to was Police presence in the neighborhoods; and I brought this up with the Chief a couple of years ago. When I lived on Dalebrook, every half hour there was a Police cruiser going down the street, every half hour. I knew when they were coming. I have lived on Brettin Drive for 20 years, and I have seen a Police cruiser when I called them because of a break-in twice. That's the only time I ever see a Police cruiser coming down the street, and when they deliver the Council packet. I hear this from residents a lot. They want to show the flag a little bit. There's a perception that when they see the Police active in the neighborhoods, that they are safer. So, that might not be modern policing, but I think people like that idea a lot. I think it does discourage. You have eyes out there. So, I would just encourage you to consider that as part of our modern policing strategy.

Councilperson Narduzzi said that's a funny statement because the other day my neighbor said when I see a Police car on my street, something must be wrong.

Councilperson Trakas said interesting. Maybe it's perception, but I just think that some type of a community policing approach where you do have a higher presence in the neighborhoods. I think it would make a big difference.

The second part of it is, in the interdiction of drugs; and we were just talking about this, Tom was bringing this up. He saw a drug deal at one of our new facilities here. I just think that, and I talked to some people who were with the task force, the FBI Task Force, some guy who lives across from my business partner in Rocky River. He said we are in Independence all day long. He said that's what we are doing there. So, they know that there's a lot of issues with the hotels in particular. It's like I just think if there's a way we can come up with a different strategy that maybe shows the flag and discourages this type of thing. Doc Asseff brought this up in our last strategic meeting, maybe two strategic meetings ago; we get dinged on crime statistics. So, when they do these top 50 communities, our rating goes down. I just think if there's a way we can change our focus to let these guys know. It's like what Rudy Guliani did in New York. If you are going to trespass, if you are going to break windows, we are going to arrest you; and boy in two years petty crime went down and that led to a massive decrease in violence.

Mayor Kurtz said for safety, I get it.

Councilperson Trakas said thinking differently about that safety and how we can roll this on. Public arrests, dragnets; I remember when you were being inaugurated in 1992, Chief Wright and a I were in the latrine over there at the Holiday Inn, and there is a guy trying to sell the Chief of Police drugs at the Holiday Inn.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said with all due respect, are those the issues, your takeaway from today?

Councilperson Trakas said no, I just wanted to make those a priority.

Mayor Kurtz asked so anything about today that you consider a priority?

Councilperson Trakas said I thought that everything Dave said was correct. I did think making sure that the school first, let's get that squared away first.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said that's our future.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I didn't mention the cemetery, but I thought that would be a long range type thing.

Mayor Kurtz said we will get into that.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we have Jeff here. You probably worked on it for the City for a long time with different proposals and everything. So, we won't have to start from ground zero on that. To me, I don't know if that's pressing like these other issues. These other issues were very important being that Seven Hills is developing with Fairmount. All the work that is going on with the Rockside Woods North extension and that; the downtown area, that might not be as pressing, but still the opportunities are there with St. Michael's and that. I think that's one of your campaign things was the downtown. That shows that we have a project that we were going to work on. Of course, the schools, that's eminent that we need to work with them.

Mayor Kurtz asked anybody else?

Councilperson Synek said so I have had the pleasure of serving on a number of non-profit boards and things like that; and I have always felt that as a board member, the very most important responsibilities as a caretaker of the organization is to understand where the money is coming from and where is it going. My observation about Council, beyond the fringes of it, is that there's not been a regular sharing of information, reports, income and expenses; and this kind of goes to the Finance Director's role. Could the Finance Director take on a more active role in providing Council with monthly financial statements, information about cash balances, the major transactions that are coming or not coming? I think for us to be able to execute all these strategic things we want to do, we have to have a clear understanding of what money is available. Where do we stand, and we have been blessed that we haven't had to worry about money because Independence is on very sound financial footing; but I think we need to up our game in that area in terms of the financial information that is provided on an ongoing basis to Council.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think Vern you have been providing us more information in the last few months than we have had. I guess we were, and I speak for myself in having John in there for so long and everything; we were at a comfort level, and John would update us periodically.

Councilperson Kapusta said we also got our monthly reports and everything and from Maggie. When we entered Council, I can speak for myself and Councilperson Wagner, we had a financial training that we came weekly for a number of weeks with our then Finance Director John Veres. I don't ever feel that John didn't respond to anything or bring us adequate information. I guess I am not necessarily concerned with that.

Now having said that, I have already acknowledged to Vern that I like the format he is using to present us the information. That's been very helpful because he is using more narrative for us non-financial people. You are different, but us non-financial people, that helps a lot to have that kind of a format with explanation and things. So, I appreciate that.

Finance Director Blaze said thank you.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we do get the financial information. We have always gotten those on a monthly basis.

Councilperson Synek said the most recent one on the website is still August of 2019.

Finance Director Blaze said the website is in the process of almost going live with a whole new website, so I haven't focused my initial energies on trying to clean up the old one.

A couple of comments there, and I am not going to say that my communication is better than John; I am just going to say my communication style is a little different in that he chose to communicate however he did. Kenn you might not have the frame of reference being your first eleven days here of how it was communicated in the past; but I think some of the veteran Council people just recognize that, again not better or worse, but it's different. My goal is always to explain it to the non-finance oriented, the non-accountants on the legislative body so that they can understand it.

As far as those reports that you got every month. That technically complies with the Charter provision that the Finance Director will communicate regularly to the legislative body. My personal opinion is that's an 80 page document that somebody really has to know what they are looking for. You could pick out a few things. There's our cash balance and that; but Kenn you probably took the words out of my mouth as far as what my goal is to be able to communicate with Council on a regular basis and take that 80 page report, which contains our entire where's the money coming from, where's it going, but distill it into a much more manageable document that we could review and discuss without having 80 pages of oh my gosh my mind is just what is this.

Mayor Kurtz said Kenn can get the 80 pages, the rest of them can have the other.

Finance Director Blaze said it's all in line. So, that's the goal of the first quarter as we prepare to sit down with Council for the permanent budget. The lead into that is what you say that I can prepare a document fairly short, that's pretty easy. Here's where we are starting with, here's where the monies come from each year. Here's how we spend it. Here's what we borrowed. Here's what we paid off in debt, and here's what's left at the end of the year for each of those years. I too agree that will help me get my arms wrapped around what the City can and can't do going forward financially because as you heard the Mayor outline a number of things today. He has been dribbling them out, sharing with me; and kind of jokingly I am like you better check and see if the money is there first. The big picture of the financial statements that I want to be more comfortable as far as exactly as you put it; where exactly is the money coming from? Which we know is substantially income tax revenue, and there's a lot of other supporting ones. How much does the operating budget take up? How much does our debt service take up? How much have we been paying cash for capital improvements versus for borrowing for; and I think those are very easily understood concepts that can help all of us here make some good decisions for the community this year.

Councilperson Kapusta said because I think if we hadn't felt that we were getting adequate information over these four or six years, whatever, then shame on us that we didn't step forward and ask for it. So, I did not feel that way. Like I said, the formatting very different, I like it. I love the narrative, but if we didn't feel we were getting it, we just sat back and didn't say anything; then we were in error.

Councilperson Trakas said shame on us.

Councilperson Synek said it's great that we get it, but it's also more important that the public can have access to the same information.

Councilperson Kapusta said absolutely.

Mayor Kurtz said in a discernable manner.

Councilperson Synek said in any manner. The public finance should never be a secret. You can't be full disclosure enough when it comes to the money. That's the surest way to lose the public's trust is if they don't trust the members.

Councilperson Kapusta said I don't think our intent was ever to keep it a secret.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Finance Director Blaze said Kenn you had a single way of being communicated with and what was (inaudible) for 19 years and 3 months. So, that's all that we kind of knew. I am not saying that I am walking on water, I am just saying I am going to bring a little different focus because you have noticed, right or wrong, we have a lot of investment with a few single entities. I want to talk to Council about what I see is a high usage of short term debt instead of locking in some of these interest rates when they are a little longer notes. They are not discussions for today, but those are great topics to get into the first quarter; in addition to fulfilling our statutory obligation of passing the budget before March 31st.

Vice Mayor Grendel said so the bottom line is we have gotten.

Mrs. Laski said I am sorry to interrupt Dave, but before you disperse, I just wanted to apologize, I missed your conversation right after the break; but I also wanted to offer that we would love to have a joint meeting between the whole Board of Education and the whole Council and the Mayor of course and Vern just so that we can update you and let you know exactly where we are and what are plans are and so forth. Some of the comments, I don't know what the five questions were that I missed prior, but I did want to let you know real quickly like somebody made a comment about the auditorium for example, saying that the auditorium at the middle school; right now that's actually the least safest place in all three of our facilities. I am not counting the Board office on Stone. So, part of it is a big issue for us as well as the structure at the middle school, the foundation and so forth. There have been comments in the past that

there's four brick walls, and it should be easy enough to repair. Well some of these things are actually cracking, and the cost of repairing is just not there because of the age of that building which, by the way, is only five years younger than the primary school.

So, again, when we talk about a new primary school; I am excited. I would like to see specifically a little bit more. I couldn't envision from the thing, from your slide. So, where exactly you were looking at; so if we have one building it would most likely be large enough building K-8. I will tell you right now we are having a huge, huge influx of new pre-schoolers. We almost have five new, we have five units of that pre-school; and we are holding back on a sixth already. So, some of those things, we are just getting information on; and we want to bring you up on all of those things so that you can see some of the things. We are losing population in terms of our student population, but we are coming in with all these new homes. We are getting quite a few with the pre-school especially.

So, I really would like to see, whenever you have the opportunity in the next two or three months to get together so we can have a frank discussion between all of us so that we are all on the same page. I really, really appreciate the support that occurred already today with putting the schools up there.

Due to the fact that there's a Presidential election in November, we are shying away from any election, going for a bond issue at that point and time; but we are looking to do our best in August.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked you don't feel like you would pull more people in the November election?

Mrs. Laski said you will.

Councilperson Trakas said a higher turnout is bad for school levies.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think the sooner we meet, the better.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Dr. Asseff said on that school levy, Council should be behind it. Otherwise, it's not going to pass. That's my read because you saw what happened, and not to bring up old coals; but you saw what happened with Issue 41. Council laid back. That's a problem we are going to still have to deal with because that totally affects housing and where we want to grow and what we have. We don't have a lot of land left for more housing, and when you talk about downtown, \$275,000 to \$350,000 or \$400,000. That draws a certain group. Is that going to draw somebody who wants to go from a \$200,000 house to \$275,000 because it's smaller and less land? So, those are the issues.

The other issue is (inaudible). Our real customers are our businesses. Our recipients are our citizens. Both have needs, and their needs are different. We can't lose sight of what the needs are of our businesses because that's what will affect the ability to spend. It's critical. 97% of our money comes from businesses, and we can't afford to lose that.

Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Doc.

I see a lot of the information that the school could provide will probably take care of some of the questions we have because the public too; although they did have the open houses and had quite a few, but the public is under the impression the school from the outside looks beautiful. They are not aware again of the infrastructure, the bones of the buildings and everything. So, again that's something if both bodies can work together, both executives can work together, I think the chance of success will be greater.

To me the sooner, if it's going on in August, we don't have too much time to dilly dally. You have to get going and get the word out, and like you said, it's a little bit different, show what the difference is in this bond issue as opposed to last November's. That it's new and improved and hopefully acceptable to the public.

Mrs. Laski said we are actually working on a model. There's going to be an actual three dimensional model. That was one the big shortfalls of that last campaign. So, there are going to be drawings as well as they are talking about a three dimensional model.

Councilperson Trakas said I think Doc is right. Let's work together on what we want to accomplish, and then let's work for it. It's harder when you have a municipal election, everybody is running for stuff; and you are out doing your own thing.

Councilperson Kapusta said I would just like to also if I could thank for Mrs. Laski for taking her time to be here today at our Council strategic planning. I appreciate that, and the insight you brought us on behalf of the Board. Mrs. Laski starts her 19th year on the Board of Education, so we thank you for that; and congratulations on your Presidency again.

Councilperson Trakas said back in the saddle again.

Councilperson Veverka said while we are in a pause here for just a second, I would suggest maybe we seriously consider coming together in May, not necessarily for a three and a half hour gathering, but for maybe an hour or an hour and a half and reviewing those four particular areas that Dave brought up and you brought up. We also had the additional safety and financing areas that were the main topics that we kind of focused on and try to set up a calendar for May for a meeting to kind of review those and see what the progress is. How would the rest of you feel about something like that?

Mayor Kurtz asked what was the other safety and?

Councilperson Veverka said I had Dave's four.

Vice Mayor Grendel said the school issue, the downtown development, the Brecksville Road, Rockside Woods North project, and then the northwest quadrant because of the Seven Hills project.

Mayor Kurtz said we can do a special session on financing, acquisition or land utilization.

Vice Mayor Grendel said and some of that in Executive Session.

Mayor Kurtz said you had mentioned safety.

Councilperson Veverka said the safety piece and then a little bit of the financing.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I am hoping to have finance meetings, Vern we could have meetings that help address those issues; and then with the safety, I think Tom you might have a meeting to maybe influence some of this new strategy or that too.

Councilperson Trakas said I was just curious Mayor, I saw the schematic you had of the Seven Hills, can you share any information? Do they have traffic studies? I don't know much about what they are doing in Seven Hills?

Mayor Kurtz said and you know what, that's why I want to communicate with them. I talked to the Mayor at their Swearing In, we had a conversation; and I was really impressed with each of them complimenting each other and how they don't always agree like a family. They said like a family. We can fight, but then we are still in the same house. I found it very, I think they are finding themselves with this development. They are definitely emerging as being part of the conversation of the larger plan. In other words, before that it was just sleepy, and there was really not a lot of economic development news. Now with this development, it shines a different light on them, and I think now is the time for us to have a good conversation about what can we do for the whole area because there is an effect on our infrastructure, on our traffic. Then we want to do something in the northwest quadrant on our land that complements, it doesn't necessarily have to compete with what they are doing. So, it's going to take a more robust discussion; and of course, the 15 acres north is Brooklyn Heights. We need to have that, re-energize that discussion of the last decade. We signed an agreement with them related to our development.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked how much does Dalad have up there? They have land also besides the City's property in that northwest quadrant.

Mayor Kurtz said 85 acres roughly, and we own 32 or 33 of it. So, the balance is owned by a consortium and Dalad is part of it. So, over 50 acres of that; and then there's 15 in Brooklyn Heights in the northwest quadrant. So, that comprises a total of about 100 acres of an uncut diamond. If you take their acreage, the 15 acres or so that Seven Hills has, and look at something. Then we have on the southwest quadrant, we still have some opportunity

management to do in that area surrounded by all those office buildings in the back. We have to look at that too as being something that is worth discussing.

Vice Mayor Grendel said you don't really hear much on the southwest quadrant. We have that party center that's supposed to go in on Acorn Drive. That kind of died.

Mayor Kurtz said that can be a unique use for somebody who needs a very private situation. I haven't figured it out in my head, but occasionally we have had businesses that needed a private setting for security reasons; and it may be an opportunity back there. Of course, the property in between by Summit; we have that vacant property that's in between all of those office buildings, off the marginal road.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think at one time, Vern you were probably on Council too, there was a proposal, I think a restaurant.

Mayor Kurtz said there was a restaurant, a Starbucks and everything else that wanted to go in there.

Vice Mayor Grendel said well Starbucks is another issue.

Mayor Kurtz said I am just kidding. Anyway, it's a lot of moving parts right now. So, to say the least, there are a lot of moving parts. If anybody else has any comments or reaction to the bookends today, feel free. I appreciate the feedback I have gotten so far. If anybody else has anything else, that's fine. If not, call me. If not, just watch this evolve, and I am learning what your priorities are; and that's good. I am glad to hear that.

Councilperson Veverka asked wasn't there also an access way to get to some acreage in Seven Hills which was supposed to come off in front of Clear Channel? There was a discussion in Planning Commission, but did that ever get developed?

Mayor Kurtz said that's where that's big senior facility is, and their access is out onto Rockside.

Councilperson Trakas said Mayor, when you are talking about the Londrico property. We went through the house, and I guess I was a sentimentalist; is there a way to split that so you can sell the house and keep it as one of the most beautiful houses in Independence and put the land as part of the park?

Mayor Kurtz said you know what, you make a good point. Everything is open, but if you don't lock something down, you have no opportunities. If there is a way to lock the property down and get the acreage in the back for permanent preservation for use by the City or whatever we decide to do with it, or future generations decide to do with it; I think that's something we should, unless I hear differently, I am going to at least find out what kind of deal we can put together and then bring the deal. If you decide up or down, that's fine; at least I got to bring the opportunity.

Your job is to decide if that opportunity falls within your prevue to make that decision. We will advance that and at least bring it to the City.

There's three or four more that we are going to bring to the City. It's premature to talk about, but we will bring them; but I will never lock anything down without having authority to lock it down. I will lock it down to the point where I can put something together to present to Council; and if you decide it's not what you want, then we are not obligated. At least we will know the parameters of it, rather than hey go do this and then make your deal. I want to bring you something that I know that it's something you can sink your teeth in, and I will work in concert with the Finance Department because it's money related. I will continue to do that, so we will present opportunities as they come about.

When we sit down to talk about real estate, we will talk about pursuing some of these issues that have overlapping benefits to the community.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked so can we get a hard date to meet with the School Board? Send out e-mails or whatever, but let's all get together because if we wait until March.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked would you rather have a weeknight or a Saturday with this kind of a setting?

Mayor Kurtz said I will ask Ben what he feels, and if it's a weeknight we can do it for a couple of hours, that's enough. It may take multiple meetings to really reach some level of discussion and consensus; but at least we will have them. Let's get it going as quickly as possible so that we are not in a further jam.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked maybe before our Council meeting or before their Board meeting? At least everybody is together.

Mayor Kurtz said we can do that.

Councilperson Narduzzi said anything more than an hour, you don't get anything accomplished anyways.

Mayor Kurtz said I will get with Ben, and we will figure out a couple of strategies in terms of trying to meet. We will try to book a meeting around the Council meeting or a Board meeting.

Mrs. Laski said that would be great.

Mayor Kurtz asked your meetings are?

Mrs. Laski said the third Tuesday.

Mayor Kurtz said so we are the second Tuesday. So, the second and third Tuesday, we will see if we can put something together. Does it make sense? What time is your meeting?

Mrs. Laski said 7:00 p.m.

Councilperson Trakas said so 5:00 p.m. or something like that.

Mayor Kurtz said 5:00 p.m. Bring some food in, eat.

Mrs. Laski said that sounds amazing.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Vice Mayor Grendel said maybe before a School Board meeting. It makes more sense.

Mayor Kurtz said maybe we will do it before your Board meeting.

Mrs. Laski said it sounds very good. We can do it in the library. See the renovations.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I have the calendar for May, I think Dale proposed, did you want to look at a Saturday in May? I don't know if anybody knows their schedule that far in advance, but we can always change it. I think this way.

Finance Director Blaze said Councilperson Narduzzi and Councilperson Walchanowicz has baseball, and I have track meets on Saturday if I am involved. That's going to be a little tough in May.

Vice Mayor Grendel said that's true.

Councilperson Trakas said May 9th is not good for me. I have drill that weekend.

Mayor Kurtz said we have a Council meeting night or something like that, a couple of hours earlier before the meeting. We will get food, and we will talk.

Councilperson Kapusta said maybe at our May 12th meeting.

Vice Mayor Grendel said let's plan before the May Council meeting then. That would be May 12th. What time would you want?

Mayor Kurtz said we could do 4:00 p.m.

Vice Mayor Grendel said that would be good. So tentatively we will set it for May 12th at 4:00 p.m. It's Strategic Planning Part 2.

Finance Director Blaze said we can't just meet once a year.

Vice Mayor Grendel said no, this way we keep more on point, and who knows there might be something between now and May that might take precedent, and we might have to add something to that list.

Vice Mayor Grendel said Vern, we will talk this week and maybe set up a Finance Committee meeting, and then Kenn we will get together and Dale too. At least the three of us, and then other Council can also come. This would be for Finance.

Moved by Veverka, seconded by Grendel, to adjourn the Strategic Planning Committee meeting of January 11, 2020. Voice Vote: 7 yes/0 no; motion carried.

The Strategic Planning Committee meeting was then adjourned at 12:04 p.m.