

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
FEBRUARY 25, 2020 5:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CAUCUS ROOM**

Present: Chairman Vice Mayor Dave Grendel
Councilperson Kenn Synek
Councilperson Dale Veverka

Also Present: Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz
Councilperson Tom Narduzzi
Councilperson Chris Walchanowicz
Councilperson Jim Trakas
Finance Director Vern Blaze
Procurement Coordinator Dennis Zdolshek
Human Resource Director Letitia Linker (left at 5:45 p.m.)
Assistant Fire Chief Jim Wheeler (left at 5:58 p.m.)
Interim IT Director Ryan Prosser (left at 5:40 p.m.)
Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said the first item of business is approval of the Finance Committee meeting, and it's from February 18, 2020.

Moved by Veverka, seconded by Synek, to approve the Finance Committee Meeting Minutes of February 18, 2020. Voice Vote: 3 yes/0 no; motion carried.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I guess Mayor, I had gotten from Letitia and everything. Did you want to go over?

Mayor Kurtz said five minutes. I do not want to mess up the Finance Director's allocated time; but he can't talk anyway, so he can't argue with me.

Finance Director Blaze said I can talk, you just don't want to listen.

Mayor Kurtz said I read the Minutes, and at the request of Council, we did make some modifications. The Communications Manager has been reduced to a 6 from a 7, from a Department Head Director to Communications Manager. Each of you received the job description.

The Project Manager, you have the job description on that; and then the last one, the IT Help Desk, a non-exempt 4. I believed everybody received the job description on that.

Basically what we are trying to do is for the Communications Manager, we want to coordinate all communication instead of it being fragmented today. Going forward with the website, you have seen some of the challenges with the website. Our marketing newsletters, the Spotlight, more importantly social media, the future of communicating with our constituents; and we need to open that door. So, I think we have to have a focus of it, a central dispatch area for that communications and to recognize the new vehicles for communication. So, that is the Communication Manager.

The Project Manager position, Letitia you could speak more to that.

Human Resource Director Linker said so the Project Manager position, initially we were thinking (inaudible) to manage several projects, probably not one significant project but multiple. To keep an eye on things, coordinate, communicate, make sure that all the people, all the relevant people are at the table and really assist in inter-departmental workings. You saw from the job description, it could either be managing teams of people or it can be managing significant projects or both; but we feel that this is a position that we would get a lot of value from with the right skill set and person.

Mayor Kurtz said it's going to raise the bar in the Engineering Department because we produce a lot of product out of that department; and we use a lot of consultants. The goal is to, and I what I heard Council say is we would like to do some more in house; we want to stretch, but we want to have some capacity inside to make quicker decisions and have some more flexibility internally rather than always depending on these consultants to have to be leveraged. That is the primary focus of this. So, that's the Project Manager position.

Then the IT Help Desk position.

Human Resource Director Linker said we had talked about that, Ryan and I have been talking about that. It's front line user support. So, if your printer doesn't work, just techy stuff, a new person and all that. Then also working on projects, upgrades, education, training, kind of a multi-purpose front line person.

Mayor Kurtz said it's just too much for one person to try to do that, and considering that we are not just an 8 to 4 service provider.

Human Resource Director Linker said this is the person who will go to the meetings and make sure things are running, be it events, all that. So, it gives us more flexibility.

Councilperson Trakas said quick question for you on that, I saw it in the job description, you are looking for a two year degree perhaps. Could you also have somebody who has gone through the career technical school?

Human Resource Director Linker replied yes.

Councilperson Trakas said I think if you put that in the job title, in the qualifications, that might help because I think some of those people coming right out of school, sometimes six year old kids are really good at this. So, I think if you had someone right out of high school, I think we could hire someone like that if they have the requisite schools; but right now we are only saying.

Mayor Kurtz said that's good, we will change that.

Human Resource Director Linker said so what we normally do is this is an Associate's degree or comparable experience. Usually that stretches to fit somebody who has done like a technical training program and also has done some work on the job.

Councilperson Trakas said the other one I thought was, I really love the idea of the Communications Director; and one thing I was wondering about is we don't mention specifically whether this individual is going to be working with the residents or with the business community or both, my preference would be both so that we could have a consistent, united message. We talked about trying to do this. I am really glad the Mayor has brought this to us because it really is important. I would also say that you might want to have some type of expertise with respect to apps and the ability to have mass communications to the community, not just social media. We didn't use LinkedIn so I think in there we say Facebook and Twitter. I would say all social media platforms including LinkedIn because the current consultant does some of the stuff on LinkedIn; and that has a marginal effect I think. If we have a full-time person doing this, I think it would be dramatically effective to have a consistent message between the City and our business community; but also someone who understands. I think we should be able to get an app on our phones and get instant messaging about anything going on in the City.

Mayor Kurtz said that's that overlap between communication and IT. I met with a group of young parents last week, and they are all about social media and all about apps and access to information. They really encourage us to become much more streamlined in terms of signing up for programs. The challenge is they want us to get down to two year olds in terms of programs, and Chris was there. Sure, we are going to work towards that, but it's a stretch from where we are at today with all the services and serviceability; it's just with the technology and information and communication, it's becoming more instantaneous every day.

Councilperson Trakas said what I think we could end up doing with this job Mayor is for example, so I am on Twitter with the Fire Department; and they had that post today about on Rockside there was a truck that had a problem. I think our business community has an advantage through the Independence Advantage Program, whatever we call it; wouldn't it be great to get the OGO that ODOT has where you get instant updates on traffic from Independence right on your phone. I think this type of a person could help develop something. I am not saying they have to be an app developer, but it would be great as an advantage to our business community to say hey look these are things going on. The food truck is going to be wherever, and if you want to know that information, we can get it to you. I think that would be a really cool business application as well that might be able to help retain and attract people. They would be like this community really has it going on, and they could figure out what is happening here.

Mayor Kurtz said we are on the same page.

Resident Dr. Carl Asseff asked do we know how many of our citizens have computers, have the ability? We are talking about one in supply and one in demand, how many people really have, is it 40% or 50% so you can tap into this technology.

Councilperson Narduzzi said they don't even need a computer now. They do everything on their phone.

Dr. Asseff asked how many people have them?

Councilperson Narduzzi said 90% of people have these.

Councilperson Trakas said that's all you can get these days.

Dr. Asseff said we don't know that.

Councilperson Narduzzi said come on Doc.

Dr. Asseff said we don't really know that.

Mayor Kurtz said we know one thing, almost everyone in the City is either going to have that or they are going to read our newsletter or read some form of publication. So, we have the capacity to touch everyone.

Dr. Asseff said we do, but isn't it our goal to try to reduce the cost and the printed material and go to the digital. So, that's our goal, and that's why I asked the question, how many people have the ability to utilize that?

Mayor Kurtz said we need to find that out more scientifically.

Dr. Asseff said so then we could design what we have to meet that.

Mayor Kurtz said it's all part of an evolutionary process.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said that contract we have with Fahlgren Mortine for \$65,000, would that be reduced with this person because they were supposed to do some of the stuff that this person will do. I don't think we need to have a company out of Columbus.

Mayor Kurtz said I haven't looked at that. I read the Minutes. I am going to put that into the mix of how we analyze this. I saw some of the frustration, I read some of the frustration; but I will make sure that we look at that before we ask for any type of renewal.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I think we met with them one time Jim and Tom. I think one time or maybe twice.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I think twice we met.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said twice, yes, but I think we have a quality person here, that person can direct a lot of that and not have to have a larger contract with them.

Councilperson Trakas said just think by way of example what this person could do, like through LinkedIn. So, you have all these businesses and people who you either live or work in Independence or in 44131. For like \$25.00 you can get access to all of those individuals, literally \$25.00; and you can get them on our little thread. I am on LinkedIn with Fahlgren through Independence Economic Development. I am usually the only one that ever likes their posts. There's like two other people who do; but it's like I think there's so many people who can utilize that type of thing. When you have an outside firm they just don't have the same focus that we would have as an individual. I think Fahlgren does some good work, and they do some branding work for us; and obviously maybe you have to decide whether you like what they do. This is more in terms of the practical. I don't think it was practical to have an outside firm doing some of the things that we really needed.

Mayor Kurtz said we will have a better pulse on it this way.

Finance Director Blaze said Councilperson Trakas, I am just the Finance Department, but based on what I have heard at Directors' meetings and so forth, I get the sense that a lot of what you are pushing for with the social media, that's what the Communications Manager will end up doing. So, the IT Help Desk and the Communications Manager, between the two of them, I think it will really take off and multiply the City's communication efforts well beyond what it is today.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said and still with the idea that you are not going to forget about the older folks. They are still going to have their printed material.

Mayor Kurtz said absolutely. This is all a comprehensive approach. When we interview, it will be for a comprehensive approach. I want someone with a variety of skill and experience, not a singular focus.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said eventually in the next 10 or 20 years, we will be phasing towards almost all digital.

Mayor Kurtz said that's exactly what's going to happen. One will phase in, and one will phase out. The pendulum will change, and we just have to be at the front end of everything that is changing.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said so Mayor you are looking at, once this position is approved, maybe getting someone in.

Mayor Kurtz said we will interview as soon as you approve it. That's why I think it's important that we get this done at the next Council meeting because again, can we trudge along? Yes, but can we become more efficient if we put ourselves in that position, that is the goal.

Finance Director Blaze said and of course we are going to need the budget approved to pay these people.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said we can approve these positions, but if we don't have the budget to budget them.

Councilperson Synek said question on the Project Manager position. I am not sure if I have all the terminology right; but in the organizational chart there's the Mayor, and is it Directors, is that the right term who report directly to the Mayor? Is the Project Manager position like report to a Director or can the Project Manager position report directly to the Mayor?

Mayor Kurtz said we could have isolated cases like that, but I envision it to be; unless for example the Engineering Department, if we have a project with a special focus, the Engineering Department will come out of that singular focus, but in most cases that will be a Director managing.

Councilperson Synek said I am envisioning this being a position to help the Mayor's office to get stuff done.

Mayor Kurtz said because some of the things we want to facilitate, I want to go through the departments so we have some continuity with them.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said so this person would work underneath, for example in Engineering, underneath Don then.

Mayor Kurtz said Don Ramm.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I see, and they would be responsible for a lot of the communications that needs to get to the residents or the business community. How would that work in conjunction with the Communications Manager?

Finance Director Blaze said, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think I am seeing it as when a major development like Topgolf comes in, that entity has to work with the Building Department, Engineering Department, Planning Commission, Zoning Board, ABR and Economic Development. So, the Project Manager is going to help that entity walk through those six departments here and make their experience with the City as seamless as possible instead of them having to figure out what to do in each of these six different departments in the City. Now they have one point of contact to coordinate all of that.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I see so even the Economic Development Director would be involved with this too.

Mayor Kurtz said and we will delegate and designate who is the point person to what department they are going to be in. It will be an overlap because that's where you build that conduit. It's all about creating some continuity and efficiency and having someone responsible so that you can see who holds the outcome as we transition from inception to completion.

Councilperson Trakas asked just out of curiosity, do we use Microsoft Project on any of our platforms?

Interim IT Director Prosser said we have used it in the past, it's not currently deployed on any machines. We had project management training through Kent State, and they kind of laid down the foundation for us to use tools, thinking in that direction. One of the recommendations was not to jump into software right away, but to kind of get the fundamental skills of project management going first.

Councilperson Trakas said the only reason I ask is because that type of software, and I am not advocating for that specific project thing, but when you talk about projects, then you can assign gantt sheets so that you know that the Planning Department is doing this; it's a tool.

Mayor Kurtz said time, expectation, decision making, a lot of those multiples across.

Human Resource Director Linker said as Ryan said, we did all the project management training last year; so the folks are starting to think in that direction; and I think the addition of the Communication Manager and Project Manager, a lot of what the Mayor is putting in place here are people who could work specifically across divisions, kind of tying together more (inaudible) of operations, which is very consistent in thinking about that.

Councilperson Trakas said one other point that I just wanted to get your vision as to how this would work. They were talking about a procurement angle and purchasing under this job description. Would that be to work through Dennis, what was that envisioned?

Mayor Kurtz said well Dennis is going to play a role in all of this. As a matter of fact, this morning at the team meeting he was, just kidding.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said my vision is to try to get, right now it seems like many of the departments, everybody operates as a separate entity; and just to try to tie them altogether, make sure that there is communication between them all. Like one of the things, just doing some preliminary exploration is a municipal software that every department could benefit from. The reason being is that everybody knows what the next guy is doing, and it will improve our communication and hopefully different projects, or anything that comes up, will get a better and quicker result.

Mayor Kurtz said so for example, the software that Dennis is talking about. You go down the road, and you see a broken catch basin. You take a picture of it, it's downloaded or uploaded; and all of a sudden it comes back in real time. The Service Department or Engineering Department or contractor goes and makes the repair. It is memorialized, and so we have an inception to completion of something that came electronically or digitally to the necessary department through an app. That's the goal of all of these together. I have taken more than five minutes.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said so we will see this on the agenda.

Mayor Kurtz said it will be on the agenda.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said in two weeks then.

Mayor Kurtz said yes, please.

Human Resource Director Linker said so you have the updated ordinance. We will just make that change.

Mayor Kurtz said we will get that change that Councilperson Trakas suggested.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Letitia.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I believe, I think it's more urgent Vern that we go to the appropriation ordinance.

Finance Director Blaze said thank you. I am going to keep my distance, but I will pass out some papers because we did send electronically to Council what we had as of Saturday; but I always say that a budget figuratively is done in pencil because it's a living, breathing document. So, since Saturday I have had a chance to sit with the Mayor and make some adjustments. The electronic version you have is substantially correct, but a little bit outdated; so here is unfortunately a hard copy, or fortunately if you like the hard copy better.

Just to recap from the last meeting, we talked a lot about the revenue side, where the money comes from, some of our debt and so forth. Then we were just talking today about what we mostly term the operating budget.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Finance Director Blaze said what you have there is 18 pages. It's presented a few different ways. We don't have to quite go through all 18 pages, I think when we get to Page 13, that's about the extent of the budget, the appropriations for the operating funds; and then Pages 14 to 18 is just presenting it in a different way with different categories so that if somebody wants to get the information by categories, groupings instead of individual line items like they are in 1 through 13.

So, the first page of it is the Police Department, and you have had some time to look at it. There's not a big change from any of the previous years. The Police Department has seen just a steady gradual increase in how much is expended in that department over the last couple of years, mostly due to the wage increases and the roll up of that when you increase the wages, you have to pay out more for the pension; and not related to the wages, but the health insurance. Even though it did show a couple of dips, generally overall it's safe to say that the health insurance increases for the City in total a little bit each year.

The one column labeled 2020 January Temporary Budget, that's the temporary three month budget that was approved by Council in December so that we could hit the ground running January 2nd and be able to pay bills.

The next column is 2020 Adjustments to the Temporary Budget, and that's for us to focus on today if there is anything glaring that somebody sees like hey we really should look at adding something in this category, or this sticks out as being high, Mayor could you look at maybe becoming efficient on this line or something. That's the column where we will make some adjustments too, and then we will end up whenever the adjustments we make in that column between now and two weeks from today, we will end up with a third last column and that will actually comprise the 2020 Annual Appropriation Ordinance.

We added that second last column called Prior Year Encumbered Funds because when we get to the end of the year, there are some purchase orders out there that, some things that have been ordered, some commitments have been made toward the end of the year; but they won't be paid until the following year. So, those funds carry over to that subsequent year; and so to enhance the budget document, we added this column so Council has a more complete picture of the actual funds available in each department. So, just take Police for example; if we passed the budget today, it would be in that column labeled 2020 Proposed Annual Budget, it's \$5,625,500, but because there is \$53,000 approximately in prior year encumbered funds that carried over into January, they will have a little bit more than that to actually spend. So, we want to be completely up front that the actual expenditures in each department could exceed the amount appropriated because of these carryover funds. Hopefully, that's explained in way that you understand that.

So, we didn't ask the Department Directors to be here today. We figured that the Council meeting in March isn't for two weeks today, so we would try to give a couple of minutes to each page here in each department to take any questions, take any suggestions. The Mayor will be taking notes, I will, Maggie will; and then if needed we could bring any Directors back next Tuesday if we are going to meet and drill down into any concerns you have. We do have Assistant Chief Wheeler here from the Fire Department, and so that's one that we have this evening. He did want to explain a little bit about why some of their total has gone up a little bit in recent years.

Anything on the Police Department page that anybody wants to discuss, question, suggest, this is our time to go line by line and just anything that sticks out or if you are like nope, we are good; we will turn the page and go to Fire.

Councilperson Trakas said just one question, and just curiosity; we have traditionally not really hit the Safety Information and Crime Prevention Fund pretty hard. I wondered Mayor if you wanted to revisit that a little bit. I know we have had a lot of discussion about some things. We can do the upgrade in the community from a law enforcement perspective, and I was just wondering if you wanted to take another look at that and see if there were some opportunities to increase the knowledge level on crime prevention and perhaps let people know a little bit more about what we are trying to do to protect them and what they could do to protect themselves. I think that in the last several months we have talked a little bit about that, and I was just curious if you wanted to revisit that.

Mayor Kurtz said we will look at that.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked and what would that consist of?

Councilperson Trakas said it could be a couple of things. Obviously, information to the public in terms of how to secure your home and your vehicle, but also to the business community; I think there's also ways that we could provide electronic communication for people as well. We have not used the Swift 911 rather extensively over the last several years; but maybe there's also some ways we could do more to let people know about immediate situations that are going on within the community without alarming people. I know that's a philosophical issue, but the other thing I think is pretty important is we still have people who don't lock their doors. Hey, we live in Independence. I think there is some community education that we might want to do, maybe have some of the Police on the bikes go door-to-door and talk about how to protect your house, just some innovative and creative things. Just make people feel safer.

With social media and with the app opportunity to know more, that also creates fear; and I think there's some ways we might be able to combat that perhaps that we can come up with.

Mayor Kurtz said we will look at that.

Councilperson Synek said so you have the line PERS which is about \$60,000. So, there's also under Other Funds that Police Pension Fund that has like \$800,000 in it. That's from basically the inside millage gets levied for Police pension and goes into a separate fund. That fund has built up a balance of \$800,000; would it not make sense to fund that expense entirely from that Police Pension Fund that just seems to be building up a balance and we will never be able to use up.

Finance Director Blaze said I don't know if we ever calculated how much actually comes in. We just got some of the advances for the first half, and I will look at that to see exactly how much we are getting in from the inside millage; and if it's enough because obviously the Police Department, what is their percentage that we match?

Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko said 19 ½%.

Finance Director Blaze said so if I take their wages of \$3,070,000 times 19.5%, that's almost \$600,000. So, we are paying \$60,000 out of the General Fund, and we need another \$540,000 from the inside millage.

Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko said the OPERS that's in here for the Police Department, that's actually the clerks, those who are not Police Officers.

Councilperson Synek asked so where is the Police Pension?

Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko said that's actually in the 850 Fund.

Councilperson Synek said okay, so it's not even in the General Fund at all. I thought that some fraction of it was coming out of the General Fund.

Finance Director Blaze said so we will then look at the inside millage if it's renumeration more to the City on an annual basis than we need to pay for the Police pensions, and if that balance has been unnecessarily accumulating, and then what the remedy is for that.

Councilperson Synek said I just encourage you to look at that. It does seem like there's getting to be a big balance in that 850 Fund, and if there's a way to lessen the burden on the General Fund and use up the resources that are already sitting there in the 850 Fund.

Finance Director Blaze said that's a good observation because I can see on that inside millage that being adjusted for the tax budget.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked where is the firefighters, where does their pension come from? We have one for the Police that comes from the inside millage.

Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko said we pay that out of the General Fund.

Finance Director Blaze said that's why you will see on the next page is Pension.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I see because they have a separate pension.

Finance Director Blaze said correct.

Mayor Kurtz said it's interesting, the reason the difference is the Police were established before the Fire in terms of their pension funds; and so that's why the Police have the direct millage whereas the Fire has evolved over the last 25 or 35 years. It wasn't as clear cut 30 or 40 years ago.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said if there's a balance, could that possibly be used for the firefighters. Or you don't want to mix things.

Mayor Kurtz said you can't do that.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said it's a separate thing.

Mayor Kurtz said I don't even know if you could use it for the support staff in the Police Department.

Councilperson Trakas said it's specific by Revised Code.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko said in the past there has been a transfer into the 850 Fund. So, we can lessen that.

Finance Director Blaze said it sounds like in the past what we got from the inside millage wasn't enough to cover the entire Police Pension obligation.

Councilperson Synek said the inside millage is about \$150,000 each year.

Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko said we got \$143,500 last year. So, we transferred in \$550,000 to make sure we had enough.

Finance Director Blaze said so if we are getting a buildup it's not because the inside millage is giving more than we need; we have just transferred too much. That can be dealt with a lot easier.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said we will move on to Fire.

Finance Director Blaze said I said it before, and I will say it again, I give Chief Rega and Assistant Chief Wheeler huge kudos, the utmost of respect for the way they prepare their budget; and we are going to use that later this year as a training method for the other Department Directors in comparing them to the 2021 budget. We will sit down and view this correctively again this fall.

You will see, the bottom line over there is that the actual expenses in the Fire Department, the 2019 line just over \$3,500,000. The temporary budget that we have is \$4,043,000, and the proposed budget with some adjustments that Chief and the Assistant Chief asked for bumps it up to \$4,061,000. So, Assistant Chief Wheeler, if you are prepared, and you want to just talk for a minute or two why a big bump up from the \$3,500,000 that was actually spent in 2019 to almost \$500,000 more being proposed for 2020.

Assistant Fire Chief Wheeler said a large portion of this was in salaries and wages. We had in 2018 a firefighter who was not paid out by us, but he was on temporary total disability, and he retired out. We also budgeted for three new personnel in 2019; but they were not hired until late in the year, and they were also hired at half the wages from a guy who was here for at least six years.

We did have two other members who left last year, and they were also paid at a higher rate than the two individuals who replaced them.

Then in 2020 we had the addition of three new members who were hired in late 2019. So, we have had a lot of changes in our department over the past year and a half to two years through retirements and the one disability issue.

Councilperson Synek asked how many approximately full-time employees are in the Fire Department?

Assistant Fire Chief Wheeler said right now there is 8 per shift, that's 24 plus three Administrative and a Department Secretary.

Councilperson Synek asked and how many in the Police Department?

Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko said 30, including the Chief and Assistant Chief Polak.

Finance Director Blaze asked does that include the Admin staff too, Jaime?

Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko said no, just the Police Officers.

Councilperson Narduzzi said in Uniforms and Allowances, I see there's \$21,000 left over from last year. Is it every two years you guys do something with uniforms? Why is that there?

Assistant Fire Chief Wheeler said that would have increased because we had three extra members that we put on this past year. So, that would account for a significant amount of that, plus the three who were put on were put on in August and actually get two checks, a maintenance check early in the year and then another maintenance check later on in the year. The three who came on didn't come on until August. So, they would have only received one of those two checks.

Finance Director Blaze said Fire Department, going once, going twice.

Councilperson Synek asked is it challenging to recruit, is it going to be difficult to fill these positions? When do you expect to fill them?

Assistant Fire Chief Wheeler said recruiting wise, the pool of applicants has gone down over the years. When I used to take tests 25 years ago, I sat in a room with 200 to 1,000 people, sometimes for no positions. This last test that we gave, we had 21 applicants who passed the test, and then we hired 6 to 7, and possibly doing one more off of that list. It's narrowed everywhere, it's not just for us. I think it's because it's a good economy; a lot of times that ties into people not wanting to go into public service like this.

Mayor Kurtz said Police is experiencing the same thing. As a matter of fact, there are some communities who are changing the rules to be able to hire, it's going to become competitive between communities now, lateral transfers. The search for new candidates can extend beyond this geographical area. You have to try to entice people to come to the greater Cleveland area, and they live anywhere in the country. So, it's becoming much more challenging to recruit; and so we lost a couple of guys to Mentor because they live in Mentor; and so when that opportunity came about, and we couldn't differentiate ourselves, it becomes what is more convenient for me.

So, I remember the days when it first started, when you could get a resident to get on board, you were thrilled. Now it's hard to get them to take a test. So, it's just a new dynamic.

Councilperson Synek asked if by chance you are not able to fill those positions, do you expect that there would be more overtime then for remainder?

Assistant Fire Chief Wheeler said there could be conceivably if we couldn't fill the positions.

Mayor Kurtz said I don't think we're to the point where we are not going to be able to fill positions. We are going to get good, quality candidates; it's just that there's not, instead of having 25 or 30, you might have 5. I still think there's a core group of good qualified candidates, you are just not going to have 25 of them; but you only pick from 10 anyway in new hires, right?

Assistant Fire Chief Wheeler said well we do banding. So, it's by score now. So, those who score 90% to 100% would be one band; but you are right, it would be a minimum of 10. You don't have the minimum of 10, you go to the second band. With this list, we did go through all four. We actually interviewed everybody on the list, and we did get qualified candidates on there; but again like the Mayor said, we just don't have as many as we did in the past. We are also competing with other cities. So, it's good to have bands, with quality candidates because they could be easily taken by another city very quickly.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you.

Finance Director Blaze said we will move on to Pages 3 and 4, Recreation. The beauty of this department is it's broken down into a number of different silos, Parks & Recreation, the Pool, Concession Stands, Fieldhouse, then the Admin Staff; and included in the Admin Staff down below is also the custodial, and that's expensed out of the Recreation Department even though they provide custodial services at just about all of the municipal buildings. Currently, it's just expensed out of Rec since the Rec Director does the staffing and scheduling and managing of that department.

Not a lot of proposed changes between the 2020 budget temporary that was passed and the proposed, the third last column. So, actually in that temporary January budget, \$2,400,000 was budgeted in the temporary budget; and we were able to reduce that by a total of \$60,250, so what we would, if we were voting on this tonight, we would actually be proposing to appropriate less than what we asked for in the January temporary budget.

It looks like Rec is pretty good. If I am going too fast, just let me know.

Page 5, the top two-thirds of the page.

Councilperson Trakas asked could you also, if you know, could you also give estimated head count, prior year versus this year on each department if you know what that number might be estimated?

Finance Director Blaze said the person who checks the payroll would know.

Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko said I mean it really.

Finance Director Blaze said at Rec Department, you have seasonal, part-time and full-time; so that's a very fluid number. It peaks in the summer with all the seasonals, and then it backs down between the part-time and the full-time.

Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko said in the Rec Department last year, we only had one full-time person leave, and that was Roger Carpenter. He was one of the major custodial people; so we just have Mark Chaney in that department right now; and nobody has said anything about hiring another full-time.

Finance Director Blaze said full-time, but all the other part-timers are there, all the other ones you see when you come here for an evening meeting.

Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko said other than that, there's no real change in the staff.

Councilperson Trakas said I was just curious for each one of the departments, what the anticipated head count, changes, that's all.

Finance Director Blaze said we will get to that visa vie, some of the legislation we talked about from 5:10 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., and you will see some changes to the IT Department and Building Department and so forth based on some of the proposed hires, based on the positions that will be created. Those are the only anticipated additional hires that I know of.

Councilperson Trakas said thank you.

Finance Director Blaze said the top two-thirds of Page 5 is Community Services Department, and you will see a big adjustment in the 2020 adjustments to the temporary budget, \$250,000. You don't have to be alarmed. I have indicated that, I believe in the electronic communication that I sent out to Council on Saturday that there is a fund called Recreation Trust Fund; and it takes in money from both the Rec side and the Community Services side, and how it had been set up in the past is the certain number of operating expenses in both of those departments had been expensed out of the Recreation Trust Fund; but we have embarked on a process to kind of gradually move those to be expensed out of the 110 Fund which is the General Fund which is what we are going over here this afternoon so that you have a more complete picture of the total cost of operating those departments because if we would just focus like we traditionally have on the General Fund expenses, there are a few hundred thousand dollars' worth of expenses that are run through in the past out of that Recreation Trust Fund. So, Maggie and I are in the process of moving some of those into this 110 General Fund; and that's why you see the big change of \$250,000 in part-time wages. Instead of those wages being expensed out of the Recreation Trust Fund this year, they will be expensed out of this line right directly in the Community Services Department in the General Fund. That's the big change from the January proposal that you have in front of you.

Councilperson Trakas again, this department has a huge summer bump in temporary hiring with summer camps and the playground. It takes a lot of part-time temporary staff to run those programs. Then it backs down to the typical levels that it is for the other 9 months of the year.

The bottom of Page 5 starts one of a few categories for the Service Department, and you can see they are broken down into Rubbish, Buildings & Lands, Motor Pool, Water & Sewer and Admin Service in the middle of Page 7. The bottom of Page 7, you will see the Cemetery with a bunch of blank entries for actual going past. That is for the same reason that we just discussed about the

Recreation Trust Fund. There is also a Cemetery Fund too that some of the day-to-day operating expenses have been run through the Cemetery Fund; but kind of the same reason, but because they are fairly nominal, we think it's more reflective since the one full-time staff member from the Service Department who is stationed at the cemetery is a Service Department employee, we feel it's more reflective to expense the cost of that person's wages as well as some of the other miscellaneous expenses for the cemetery in the actual Service Department General Fund budget instead of separately in this Cemetery Fund. So, that's the second attempt for us to kind of gradually get away from the use of that Cemetery Fund and throw the expenses into the 110 General Fund; so again, you have a much clearer picture of what it actually costs to run the entire Service Department, including the cemetery.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I see back on Page 6, the residential tree trimming.

Finance Director Blaze said alright, good eye.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked is it coming back?

Finance Director Blaze said it's up to the persons to your left and to your right.

Mayor Kurtz said but I don't see it coming back in the form that we used originally. The thought is that we would mirror something like Valley View; and I will bring that ordinance to Council, and we can discuss it, debate it and then if the majority feel compelled to add this. I wanted to add the funding into our appropriation. What Valley View does is you pay the first \$500; so the days of the \$50, it was kind of like people just took advantage of it. When you have to put up \$500, it might cost \$1,000 or \$1,200 for us to take down trees in your yard; but at least you know, it's something you could do. If you only do it once a year or two, and there's an order. It's an organized fashion. I will get a copy of that ordinance. I talked to the Mayor, and he said it works very well because it's not just anybody and everybody wanting to use it; but it serves a purpose. I will always say this that we spent a lot of money on that program over the years; but I can tell you, knock on wood, I still believe that we saved a lot of property damage over the years, and thank God we never had any physical challenges.

I bring that up at the request, for Council; and before we have legislation. It might be next month, we will make sure we have a chance to fully vet it through the committee, or through the committee as a whole; but I wanted to at least put some money aside so we have some seed money into it.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I know we approved, wasn't it just a partial year for that company. We had the one bidder.

Councilperson Trakas said it was a little different, but yes.

Mayor Kurtz said that's correct.

Finance Director Blaze said that's for the City.

Mayor Kurtz said that's for the City. This is for the residents.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said that was the one, aren't they out of Geauga County.

Mayor Kurtz said yes.

Finance Director Blaze said you can see the Total Service. Obviously, the Police, Fire and Service are the big three departments as far as expenditures, followed by Recreation. So, in Service there are a lot of employees. There are over 20 full-time employees Councilperson Trakas, and millions of dollars' worth of capital equipment with all the trucks and equipment that the department has. Whoever the Director and Management Team of that department is, they are not only managing a lot of numbers on a document like this, but it's a fair number of people, and a fair number of millions of dollars' of assets that we own. Then they are responsible for overseeing tens of millions of dollars of our infrastructure assets, our roads, our sewers, our sidewalks. It's a very, very important department.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I noticed with our mild winters, we have had the available funds in the Senior Citizen driveways.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Finance Director Blaze said you heard what Trivisonno said, I expect the 18 inch storm to come Opening Day. That lake will be open, so if we get a north wind, then look out.

If we are done, I don't want to rush you; if there's nothing we can go to Page 8, and we have two departments there, Tech Services as well as Information Technology. A couple of adjustments in that fourth last column, the 2020 Adjustments to the Temporary Budget; so Mayor if you would like to talk about the addition for the wages in Tech. We were really able to cover everything in IT so far unless we anticipate a need to adjust that.

Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko said Tech's wages are up because of Kathy coming back.

Mayor Kurtz said we brought somebody in to manage the team in Tech Services. They didn't have an support staff at all; so we have no way of really expecting them to have a full complete summary of everything that is taking place on a daily basis. So, the goal is to have them get a little more sophisticated with their information; and as we apply some of it in the future. The goal is to apply some of the technology that we are looking at that will make it more effective in terms of every repair that we make to the buildings, we will be able to apply that to the report we are going to get from our consultant. So, we will have a standing library of data; but right now it was just piecemeal. So, we brought someone in to help Dave and his team, coordinate that effort.

With respect to IT, again IT to me, if you talk to Letitia; and we believe that we are looking at a long term strategy with IT, just like we did 12 years ago with Economic Development. We are looking at reviewing all of the departments; but IT is one that we need to look at carefully. At least I can tell you from the private sector, our experience in the private sector; we don't have the

capacity today to fully protect ourselves the way I think we need to. So, what is not reflected here is some outside support to act as another firewall for protection for our internal protections, especially with Finance. We are having some breaches today in terms of, a good example of it might be, e-mails coming from me to Department Heads saying that I need gift cards right away. You read about other communities, but we had the same thing happen to us. I believe it's the tip of the iceberg; and if we can stop it there, we will be thankful.

The point is that we need to raise the bar in the entire process of information management and information disposition; and we are looking at how we are going to manage it internally, plus what resources we will need externally to be that safeguard for protecting this community and the vast amount of technology we use and money we process.

So, that's where we are at today, and so just to be clear, we are just starting this transformation. We will be back to Council later this year when we settle in on something that is more concrete.

Councilperson Trakas said Mayor, with respect to the Building Department; we had talked for some years now about trying to have a part-time or full-time inspector. I think this would be along the lines of what you are talking about in terms of beautifying the community. Any progress on something like that? Where we can bring someone on who is trained; I know you are working on an ordinance that might give us some enhanced capabilities, but without a human to do it. They were submitting their report about how many inspections they did on a weekly basis, and they were looking at 130 inspections which is visual by car. I don't know how robust that will be able to be. I think they are limited, but I do think that perhaps for the second half of the year we may be talking about hiring someone. It could be part-time, but I think that's a priority, and it certainly matches what your philosophy is on this.

Finance Director Blaze said that's Page 9; are we done with Page 8 with Tech Services and IT?

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said the Help Desk Specialist, is that included in here?

Finance Director Blaze said yes because the \$158,900 is just the gross wages right now. Ryan is not being paid close to that; so we don't have to propose any adjustment to that. It actually replicates what we used to have between Ryan and Kyle, both making approximately \$70,000 a year gross; but depending on who gets hired, it looks like it's going to be the Help Desk Technician first.

Mayor Kurtz said but we will be back to Council sometime later this year with a more sophisticated approach to managing IT; but we want to make sure that we do more homework before we present anything on a more formal basis. This keeps us in flight, but a little asterisk that we will be back to further define our needs as we put them together.

Councilperson Synek said so it kind of sounds like Vern, there really isn't an IT support consultant that we use; it's our own employees mostly.

Mayor Kurtz said that being clear, we are going to have some outside support.

Councilperson Synek said frankly I am surprised that there isn't someone. Every client I have worked with, you have to have a banker, you have to have a lawyer, you have to have IT support, you have an accountant. Everyone has that.

Mayor Kurtz said in the private sector, at every one of our companies, we have somebody who we go to, and they watch and they are kind of like measuring; and when you are in that situation, they will make the call. They are the ones with insurance as well as function to support it. That's one thing we need to do. We need to upgrade protecting the City, and we are taking steps to look at that.

Councilperson Veverka asked didn't we do that on a consultant basis this past year?

Mayor Kurtz said I don't know.

Councilperson Trakas said I don't remember anything.

Councilperson Narduzzi said not for IT.

Councilperson Trakas asked did we do that for IT?

Several people said no.

Finance Director Veres said if we did, then they worked for free.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said we are definitely going to put that together, sooner rather than later.

Councilperson Synek said Ryan is a talented guy, but no one can know all there is to know about that field, the security of credit card processing or virus protection or; there are just so many different avenues, and to have consultants that he needs the support also.

Mayor Kurtz said they have expertise, and then they can protect us. It's a go-to company with the insurance to back up if in fact there is a major breach.

Finance Director Blaze said now we get to Councilperson Trakas, Building Department where in that adjustments column, there are some adjustments to both the Building and the Engineering that I think the Mayor can speak to.

Mayor Kurtz said this is to answer your question and hopefully raise your comfort level with respect to inspections, and the need and demand of the community to beautify, upgrade. I do not have a horticultural position established here yet. We are going to talk about that because that's the next level of beautification and sustainability; but initially what I wanted to do is just make sure we are putting our money where our inspections are. So, the other component of that are the ordinances; we are looking at a number of communities to craft the best ordinance. That moratorium was a step in the right direction; so we are going to present several ordinances to

Council to review that we really believe would be important to be the tools to give the people to do the job to enforce. There's not a day goes by without someone bringing up some unsightly situation that's been around for a long time.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I just passed a letter out again today.

Mayor Kurtz said we are aware of it. This is the one step. The other step will be the ordinance, and then we will communicate the message to the residents. We will give them ample time to help themselves; and then we will help them. We are looking at a program that will be able to help those who can't help themselves. We do have a segment of the community that's in that position today; and I believe we are creating a vehicle that will do that in a way that's sensible. It is also sensitive, and it doesn't take away your dignity in the process; but we can recover our investment. At the same time, the community is upgraded in terms of appearance and livability. That will be to be continued. This is really the mechanism to have the people on board to support the ordinances that we need to put in place to get this thing going. The spring time is usually the best time to start. That's our goal.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said we can't allow people to just walk on their property who are looking.

Mayor Kurtz said and we are not going to do that. That's not how other communities who have successfully managed theirs. There's communication; there are a number of communication tools that are used and enforcement mechanisms that are in place. There are some tried and true measures.

The same thing with Engineering; we talked about not being so dependent on outside vendors and contractors to support the level of need that we have in this community. What we are doing is we are moving toward, and we can't expect the Department Head and the support team that they have today to not have additional manpower with the technical skills to help us internally so when these contractors come to the City, we are sophisticated enough to discuss on whatever level they are capable of discussing; whether they are a successful large contractor or a small mom and pop shop, we need to be able to navigate that landscape and walk them through that process.

We have a number of internal demands or I wouldn't say they are projects; but they certainly are ideas that we are constantly looking at, seeing if we can take a concept to an idea to Council to implementation to make an additional service or increased service or serviceability.

For example, the simple thing we talked about would be the cemetery. You just don't create all these options or ideas without somebody taking the time to do the homework, explore it, bring in a consultant, talk about this; and then be able to present our options. You can't expect the existing team to be able to layer on all these different ideas we come up with without some support or Don Ramm will be there 24 hours rather than just getting e-mails at 1:00 a.m. or 2:00 a.m. We are much more sophisticated than that. We have to act that way. Again, it's consistent with what I have heard from several members of Council, and it's consistent with why it needs to be the best strategy long term.

Councilperson Trakas said and Mayor I think it's prudent for us; I agree with the direction you are going in, but I would even encourage you think more. I think we use way too many outside consultants in terms of engineering and design; and I think some of them quite frankly let us down. So, if we have a department that is doing this, but we could save a ton of money on these outside costs. We are spending millions of dollars in no-bid contracts; that's what this really is on these things, and it's always frustrated me, but I would love to be able to bring that internally and help design these projects internally with people who we trust that work for us and can work to our stipulations.

Councilperson Narduzzi said because at the end of the day, Don still has to oversee them, outsourced or not; and the Hemlock Trail is a perfect example of how things get out of hand if you don't put 100% focus on a project. Now we are going to end up paying the consequences for that.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked when are we going to be able to add another person in Engineering?

Mayor Kurtz said we won't do anything until next month. You know what, I would say the second quarter.

Councilperson Veverka said well but the downside Jim of hiring somebody else in, is you have the cost, you have the benefits, you have everything else; and then they are there full-time, all the time. If you are not pulling up that many projects in a particular year, you are still paying that particular individual all the time, full-time. When you hire a consultant, an engineering firm in to do the job, and they are being overseen by a department, then you don't have the extra expense of a person in the department that you are paying all those expenses for.

Councilperson Trakas said that's true.

Councilperson Veverka said there's balance.

Mayor Kurtz said finding that balance is the key.

Councilperson Veverka said right, absolutely.

Mayor Kurtz said when you do the number of projects, and you have a number of requests and demands that we put on the table on an annual basis, it's a hardworking department. One of the things what you have seen here is you need backups to the Department Heads to effectively, we have a backup in the Fire Department here because we have a backup. Don doesn't have a real backup, and Service Department doesn't have a backup. Now can we pinch hit and make things work, absolutely. Is that really the way to plan an organization to be sustainable? It works for us, but I think you have to have people in play who carry the ball when you retire or when you are unavailable so you don't lose that level of service. To find that balance is still the proper way to do it.

Councilperson Veverka said but we have more than one full-time Engineer; and Joe is an Associate. That department does have more people.

Mayor Kurtz said we do a lot of work out of that department.

Councilperson Veverka said understood.

Mayor Kurtz said there's millions and millions of dollars of work that relies on them. We rely on that department to give us good information so that we can make good decisions. So, I have been on both ends of that where we have dropped the ball; and where we have carried the ball past the finish line. It's that balance. It is what the goal should always be with each of these departments.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked could you give us a cost on what we spent on outside engineering for the last couple of years?

Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko said yes.

Resident Dr. Asseff said I have a comment here, I am all for outside consultants; but there are some projects that are really high risk that should have an outside consultant because they have insurance. So, it's a balance. We are protecting ourselves with an insurance deep pocket if this project goes south versus we do it, and it goes south on us, we have to (inaudible).

Mayor Kurtz said well I just had that conversation at the team meeting this morning with the project that is going through, Rockside Woods North. They are going over that pipe now; and they are using a lightweight aggregate, and I said Don make sure they have good insurance and make sure that the EPA is aware of everything that is going on because a couple of years down the road if there is a leach or if there is a problem, I don't want the City of Independence on the hook. Years ago the owner of that property tried to transfer the risk of that pipe to the City of Independence; and he would have slipped it in if given the opportunity. We caught it and said no. It did shift. They had to go fix it.

Councilperson Trakas said that was a lot of money.

Mayor Kurtz said we own the outcome of this one, and that's why we are paying almost a million dollars for inspection fees; and so all I told Don was just to make sure that everything is in order on this. This is a highly sensitive project in that if there's a flaw that's not managed during the construction process; and then we are the owners of this down the road. I just want to ensure that we are spending all that money so we might as well get our value added out of it; if it's a form of protection or insurance, great.

Dr. Asseff said it's dealing with risk analysis, and you have the team do the risk analysis and say this is one we go on the outside, and this is one we do inside.

Mayor Kurtz said and that's a fair balance. It's a balancing act.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said it will be interesting Mayor now that we have about 12 years that we have had our own Engineering Department to see the differences, the track record, the last 12 years of having Elewski. I still say we made the right move back then having our own because there were so many conflicts. Greg, you were part of it between the Finance Department and the Engineering Department. The turmoil that was caused during that time; and at least now we are perfecting what we have done.

Mayor Kurtz said and there were times that we spend \$100,000 a month to our consultant at the time; and we weren't doing nearly the level of work we are doing today. We are spending millions of dollars today; but look at the amount of work we are doing also. So, having enough support team internally to make sure you are managing that properly; and again a lot of this, we do a lot of idea, concept, idea, and then does this make sense? Sometimes it sits on the shelf, but it's there for future generations. It was a good directional move, and I think we really hit the lottery with Don Ramm. He needs to be a human being too. We have to have a support network there to give him some flexibility. I tell him Don, I really want your brain, get other people to help pull that rope for you while you are exercising your brain in terms of some of these ideas and concepts we come up with.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said and at that time Don Elewski didn't have a backup. When his backup, he would really insult Council members and insult the Mayor. He had no temperament for handling the public. When he was at those meetings, people would get insulted by this man.

Mayor Kurtz said we have come a long way. Don't misunderstand, we have come a long way; and I still think there's a lot of room for improvement.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said that's why I like the idea of the Project Manager. That's going to lighten the burden on Don and make sure that you have someone; like this project here was one that would have benefitted for somebody like that.

Mayor Kurtz said absolutely.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said to move along as well as the Topgolf one. We still have now, I guess Saucy Brew Works is still going through.

Mayor Kurtz said I have heard nothing contrary to that. They may have picked up a million or a million and a half in funds through the County. We are waiting for them to come back, which is normally the process you go through. You start that, and it stalls. It starts, it stalls; but really there is nothing we can do about it at this point. We wait for them to come back and say okay now we are ready; or here is the direction we are going in.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I know they are eager with the trees and everything because of the bat season or whatever. They have a window there.

Mayor Kurtz said I have not, not that I would necessarily hear anyway; but I haven't heard anything other than what I read in the paper.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I checked their website, and you don't see anything touting coming to Independence. I just was wondering.

Councilperson Trakas said that thing that burned down in Rocky River was his, Brent Zimmerman. That was big. He was the investor in that.

Mayor Kurtz asked Zimmerman?

Councilperson Trakas said yes.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Trakas said there were propane heaters in there they said.

Mayor Kurtz said we haven't not heard anything, there has been no advancement. There's really nothing we can do.

I did hear that they were doing something at Pinecrest, but they also mentioned Independence. They wanted an eastside presence, and they have the downtown presence and the Independence presence. I don't know if situations like this set them back.

Councilperson Veverka said the other thing we have to project also is how many big projects do we have. We have a big blip these past couple of years with a large number of big projects that were, we were catching up; basically what it boiled down to. Money was put aside specifically focused towards streets and getting those things back up to speed. So, as you look down the road when we get the projects done, is it going to level out? If it's going to level out, that goes back to the need for how much in-house do we need? That goes back to that balance again. So, if you do decide you are going to take that jump, and you are going to add that particular person and then you drop your need, then what? You don't want to put yourself in a position where you have to let somebody go or you have to have somebody there that you don't have an appropriate amount of work for either. That goes back to the balance.

Mayor Kurtz said one person, two people that's not going to make or break the bank on this if we get some additional value out of it. If we were doing 10 or 15 people, then I would be saying you know what, maybe we overloaded this thing. It all depends on supply and demand. If we catch the right hook, if a couple of these things comes to fruition, I will look further about some of the other things we are talking about; but suffice to say, I think this is the right step for Engineering.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked this person will be an Engineer?

Mayor Kurtz said I am not sure what the credentials are. We haven't really gotten that far.

Councilperson Trakas said it will specify in the ordinance.

Mayor Kurtz said until we get a flavor of what the application looks like, the type of people we get. We can find some, like the doctors where I am on a couple of these Boards. The whole mantra of getting the brightest person without the personality isn't working anymore. These schools for osteopathic medicine, they are looking for the right person who can communicate. It is a blend of everything you get now.

Dr. Asseff said the paradigm has shifted, and it isn't the A student the one you want because they may not produce when you put them in the trenches. It's the B student who knows how to get out of the trenches.

Mayor Kurtz said the same thing, we are going to find the best qualified person who can service and provide an extra layer of opportunity for this community.

Finance Director Blaze said Economic Development. There is a material change proposed to that one too. Mayor, it looks like you are still up.

Mayor Kurtz said so Economic Development, when we created the Economic Development Department a dozen years ago, when we interviewed we had several candidates who were exceptional; and we also determined that we want someone to be able to interact with potential customers, but we also need someone in the trenches to be able to retain those customers. What we had at one time, Liberty moved on in 2015 or 2016; but she was a great liaison. You talk to Jeremy or anybody who worked with her, she was good for customer retention; and I think that the multi-prong approach to Economic Development is going to be an important, talking with a number of people in other communities. It is going to be a much more, the competition is still very robust and having somebody back in the field retaining businesses.

We met with a developer the other day, and he said that, I can't remember the percentages of what he said; but the retention, he never wants to lose a customer out of his buildings because the cost of replacing that customer, the monthly rent you lose, the cost of renovation and the cost of bringing somebody else in, and the discounts you have to have to bring them in, he would rather work on keeping that customer in that space than having to go through all the expense and revenue lost by losing them. So, I believe him. I believe what I have listened to a number of business leaders in the community talk about you better get somebody out there knocking on these buildings' doors and your thousands of business customers to make sure to find out what their needs are, what their expectation is and what their concerns are. As much as we polish the apple, it's not perfect; and when you start to understand why we lose some of these major players, and you have a source of resources that can be honest with you, you find out that traffic is still a concern. Traffic is still a concern, even though we, who are here, think man we solved the traffic problem. When you talk to some of these major players that do not choose Independence, you find out that's one of the concerns, traffic. Well, good now that we know what the concern is, let's attack the problem, and we added additional ramps and different ways to navigate through that.

The point is Economic Development, I believe that we have to re-invent ourselves through that process; and we are going to have to deal with our existing customers in a more contact face-to-face type of environment rather than rely on our good looks and good image or our location. It's

going to be much more of a challenge. That's why I think that, and others I have talked to, this is evolving; but I truly believe we have to have someone who is going to be in trenches, dealing with our customers. We are going to find out so much information that will help us retain and attract new customers.

Dr. Asseff said I support that totally. This is not 2017 anymore. It's 2020, and you have competition up the road which is Seven Hills. That's real competition. We have Brecksville which is real competition, plus you have the other communities around. We have to have service awareness, and that's the person you are talking about.

The other thing we need, and as I read this, we need a few more amenities so that our employers who have all the employees say gosh this is a great place to be because this is what my employees can do. We have more restaurants than we know what to do with. Nobody is starving on Rockside Road, but there are other amenities that may be needed; and that's what we have to find out.

Mayor Kurtz said as we talk with our customers. Jeremy, you cannot talk to everybody in the business community. It's too large, and we need to have people who can talk at level and learn what amenities they want, what is their expectation of the community in terms of service and serviceability, and what we need to do to ensure that they are going to be here 5, 10 and 15 years from now.

Dr. Asseff said the other thing we want in that same sense Mr. Mayor is that they are advocate to bring in more business. They talk to their fellow people in the same business area and say Independence is a great place because of x, y and z.

Mayor Kurtz said and the last component of that is really what I discovered is that we need to attract not only the new business, we need to attract the executives in those businesses to live here, whether they are accounting firms or legal firms. IT is a huge component of this. It's a micro player in this entire economic development engine we have here; and we don't even announce it. If you look and see the number of IT companies that are here. They told me when I was in Columbus and go to these different functions; and I say well where does your brother live, he runs this IT company with 80 people? Well he lives over at Gordon Square. Why doesn't he live in Independence? He has children, I want him in Independence. That's why we have to have an excellent school system. That's why we have to have safety. That's why we have all these different amenities. I am not getting on a soapbox, but you see where we are going because this isn't being hatched, it's evolving; and it's much more sophisticated, and we have to drill down and find out what needs to be fixed. We have to find out what we are doing really good, and then springboard into something that is better.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said when I was off Council for those four years, I think Liberty did come to my office. She called and asked can I come to visit, and it was kind of nice. She asked how things were going, anything the City can do for you. It was nice. Even just a small thing, so she was making those calls. I think as a business owner you appreciate the City just asking how things were going and if there any suggestions and things of that nature; plus it was

kind of a void that we have had in the last few years. I think it's well needed, an ombudsman to make sure that we here to service those commercial residents too.

Mayor Kurtz said we can always do better.

Dr. Asseff said there is another person we have to consider, the Executive's wife. The wives have to look at this City with (inaudible).

Mayor Kurtz said remind me to tell you a story about my father-in-law someday and his business.

Finance Director Blaze asked why be the Executives?

Mayor Kurtz said spot on, or it might be the Executive's husband too.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Trakas said this is more long term, but I think we should think about how we can put together a fund or leverage significant funds for renovations of some of our offices. So, I remember my freshman year at Ohio State, you were elected Mayor just the year afterwards. Every time I came in to Independence from spring break or winter break or Christmas or whatever, there was a new building going up. I mean we had an amazing amount of growth obviously throughout your entire career here. So, now we are mature in these office buildings, and I harken back to my time working in the Leader Building downtown. Class B, Class C, all of the sudden it's condos or whatever they are trying to do downtown; I disagree with that strenuously, but that's what they want to do. I think we have to start thinking about, we look at bright shiny objects; and wow there's going to be a new big thing in Brecksville. There's a new big thing in Seven Hills; we have things right now. I think trying to leverage our assets to create renovation funds to renovate the existing buildings we have; those are the ones in an off economy they are going to start really feeling it I think. Those are the kind of places where they have the startups, the startups might not do so well. When you start talking about your vacancy rate, it's not in the big buildings, it's going to be in the Class B and C type buildings. Those buildings built in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's are now of the age where technology is not functioning properly there. It's hard to get firms who are going to be technology oriented. I couldn't have a cell phone work in my beautiful Leader Building office. It was beautiful though. It had really nice wood, and it was well done; but you couldn't use a cell phone. There are buildings like that here in Independence that are problematic. This is not quite the place to talk about that, but I would like to put on the table the establishment of some type of vision to come up with money that can help leverage assets, maybe we draw down Federal or State monies to help these types of groups. You have mature building owners, new out of town building owners; I think we need to engage those folks as to how to upgrade.

When we talk about upgrading our residential, okay we know that. We have to upgrade our commercial as well. There are some shabby commercial as well, and I don't think they are purposely shabby, but you have mature business districts that are not going to be attracting people. I think we ought to start looking at how we do that, and it takes cash, and it takes

creativity and innovation. I think that if we are talking about Economic Development, that's going to be a huge part of this I think.

Councilperson Veverka said what I was going to say, the other piece of that puzzle is for instance making that connectivity. There is a group in downtown that meet on a regular basis that are trying to work together to try to connect with each other. The people from Curves, Dollar Bank, the Kitchen, and they meet on a regular basis, and the chiropractor and others trying to drum up support within that group; and that's who we have to connect with. I mean when you have a group on their own that are trying to get together and trying to facilitate that growth in the center of downtown and support each other, we can't let that go by. I have attended at least one of the meetings that they have had, and that's a critical piece of this puzzle.

Mayor Kurtz said I agree with both of you, and I just had a call from a friend who was looking. He has an \$8,000,000 payroll, and he wants to be on Rockside Road. He has put bids on several 35,000 buildings; and he's come up a little short every time. So, I said why don't you just build something new, and he said the cost of building new compared to what I can buy if I can buy one of these. Right now the price is pretty high though, but he wants to buy, he wants to be on Rockside Road. They talked to him about going to Brecksville. They have talked to him about going to, he said no I want to be right here. I want you to help me with some funds. I said you find the building. We have those grants, the relocation grants. There is the vehicle. Absolutely, we will help you to retain or to build a new \$8,000,000 to \$12,000,000 payroll; yeah we can help you.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked any activity in that one building that was totally gutted that's on the corner of Rockside Woods?

Mayor Kurtz said yes, that's the one he lost.

Councilperson Trakas said that's good, people want them.

Mayor Kurtz said they are in demand right now. He did tell me who took that one, but like you said, they are gutting. They are bringing in technology. They are opening them.

Suffice to say, that where we are going from an economic development strategy is to become more holistic in terms of retention, new opportunities and then also talking to our existing customers and trying to understand what their needs are, what we can do to keep them here.

Finance Director Blaze said Councilperson Trakas, to address your idea just a little bit. You are spot on, and whether you realize it or not, if Economic Development Director Rowan was sitting here, he would tell you that you as a Council and Mayor, Administration has been assisting him with exactly what you just advocated for. He quotes the total square foot of office space that exists within Independence right now, and the high percentage of that space that the attraction and retention grants that this body has facilitated in the last number of years, has allowed for to fill the gap in that renovation of that space; and it's I believe, I will get in trouble for throwing figures out, but 4,000,000 of square feet total of office space on Rockside Road in the attraction and retention grants have helped renovate and update in excess of 1,000,000 of that space. So, it

has allowed some Class C space to go to Class B, and some Class B to maintain its B; and of course the Class A is the very new stuff. So, we could look at that further in conjunction with economic development, but a big part of the attraction and retention grants have gone right into improving the physical buildings in the manner that you just announced. So, kudos to you for thinking about it, and kudos to all of you for facilitating those grants because it's exactly what Economic Development Director Rowan has been advocating for to help us stay competitive with our existing office space.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said okay, we will move on to Page 11.

Finance Director Blaze said well actually that was 9, Building, Economic Development, Boards and Commissions. There's no cuts there, we have just been budgeting a little bit too much more than we have been spending for Planning, Zoning, ABR and so forth; so we were able to cut that back a little bit.

Then the Mayor's office; we had \$3,100 budgeted for overtime, but I believe Dar is now an exempt employee and so there is not the need to budget for overtime. So, we just kind of eliminated that; so, not a ton of changes in those two categories and departments.

Councilperson Trakas said I just have one quick question. Mayor, we do have, and I am kind of a broken record on this; but we do have our Tree Commission, and it hasn't been staffed in some time. It may cost a few hundred bucks to put some people on there, but it's only three people according to our statute; and I think there can be a need to correspond to your vision on improving the community and perhaps some other things.

Mayor Kurtz said I am listening. I hear you.

Finance Director Blaze said they may do it for free.

Moving to Page 11, and you have the Finance Department at the top, Council Office in the middle.

Mayor Kurtz said that's the one that needs to be addressed. Just kidding.

Finance Director Blaze said I will tell you about the Council Office. I did sit with Debi briefly earlier in the year and just asked her to review it; and obviously she has no control over the wages, overtime, health insurance and OPERS, but the other parts as far as General Supplies and Materials, Training and Travel and Dues and Subscriptions. Debi was able to weigh in, and what we have here is the reflection of some of her input. I think she was appreciative of the fact that the Finance Department reached out to her for her input instead of here's your budget for the year, work with it. So, we are trying to always be a little more user friendly and reach out to departments instead of just mandating stipulations.

Mayor Kurtz said the Law Department, we will have a discussion on that probably in Executive Session at some point in the near future based on, you received a memo from the Law Director recently.

Councilperson Trakas said that number looks a little low to me.

Finance Director Blaze said that's not all we spend for legal services. Some of it gets budgeted out of some of the TIF Funds if it's TIF related. Some of it, say the one current suit with the employee, I suspect those will come from the Self Insurance Fund. For legal expenses, we are taking it out of multiple funds. This is for the legal services that are rendering substantially to this body. It's more of the legislation and day-to-day things. The other legal services sometimes get paid out of some of these other funds.

Finance Director Blaze said General Government on Page 12, there's a lot on there. There are a lot of things that just don't fit neatly into any of the other departments that we have already talked about; so they kind of get lumped in this General Government. It's where some of your expenses that, you know Councilperson Synek in a strict accounting sense, if we were looking to determine profits and losses in each specific department, a lot of the expenses in this fund, in this grouping of accounts would be allocated to some of the other departments because telephone, natural gas, electric, it's used by all of the departments; but it's lumped in here as a total expense. There's a number of additions, a number of subtractions. Probably the only one that's big on the upside in that last column is in the wages. It looks like there is going to be a request for an additional person. Would that have been the Communications person?

Mayor Kurtz said yes.

Finance Director Blaze said that person didn't fit neatly into any of the other.

Mayor Kurtz said only because we didn't have any place to put them.

Councilperson Trakas asked you literally don't, can you hire a human in this building? There's almost no place to put them.

Mayor Kurtz said you mean physically put them. Well, we have that one office in the front where the person from the County was working. As we embark upon a safety upgrade of this facility, we will have to modify that if in fact we go to a secure site; and we end up like Brecksville, cutting off access into the Administration offices over there through a situation opposite of like you see in the Police Department. Even Court will use their own courtroom, the original courtroom was that room when Barb Mack was here. We would punch a hole in the hallway, so no one would have to come into City Hall to pay a ticket. Then when we have court, we obviously have a Police Officer there. So, we have protection when someone has a court date. So, other than that, you will eventually talk to somebody like somebody at the front desk; and you will be buzzed in to this side of the office. Obviously, you have your own passes, but to secure the staff who are there on a daily basis, even for the court people. They will have access into that center rotunda area, not the City Hall side, where the bell is. So, there is a lot of different dynamics going on with that, but that's for a project. That is a capital project. That is not part of this right here.

Finance Director Blaze said almost three-quarters of the way down, there is a line for Promotions and Civic Events. There is a proposed \$50,000 adjustment to that account too. I think the thinking there was that if a Communications person is going to come aboard, that person will also be ramping up the promotions, the advertisement, the communications, the social media stuff itself, lacking a specific fund right now; we just threw it into that line to reflect that. You are talking about Twitter. You are talking about Facebook. You are talking about all the ways that people are communicated with today.

Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko said it's for Home Days too.

Finance Director Blaze said part of that too is, there is a separate Home Days Fund; and just like we talked to you that we are moving some of the cemetery money out from the Cemetery Fund into the General Fund; and we are moving some of the Recreation Trust money into the General Fund. We also feel that we kind of can rely less on the Home Days Fund and just run it through the General Fund. So, a lot of that is for that event as well.

We are almost there.

Councilperson Trakas said on the Lifeline, I thought there also was a fund balance on the Police. Is this the same Lifeline? It was Fire, sorry.

Finance Assistant Maggie Osysko said we don't use that line.

Councilperson Trakas said okay, so this is where it actually comes from? I thought it was low when I saw it.

Mayor Kurtz said yeah, it's really low.

Finance Director Blaze said there's court. It stays pretty consistent. They have three full-time employees there. It's basically the wages, the health insurance and PERS that drive that.

As an aside, there's a 25 and Alive Fund, and if we get together next Tuesday, if the decision is made to meet one more time to maybe talk about some of those other funds beside the vast majority of the Operating Budget that we are discussing tonight; we could do that and talk about some of these other funds, and one of those is the 25 and Alive Fund. We have been appropriating a nominal \$2,000 into that the last couple of years, but I believe with Mayor Kurtz and Clerk of Court Zidanic recognize some opportunities to enhance that 25 and Alive Fund, rebrand it, reutilize it, ramp up its effectiveness within the community. So, she put together a little proposal to increase the amount of appropriation of that fund. It's not part of this, but I just bring it up because she's the one who administers that \$2,000 appropriation. She is asking for about \$16,000 for 2020. So, really to take that 25 and Alive and rebrand it and really dial up its effectiveness in the community because we have been fortunate, knock on wood, as far as efforts paying dividends without any recent opioid deaths in Independence; but it's not to say that there aren't other issues out there that the Mayor's Court and Clerk's Office that they deal with a number of issues that our residents are facing. I think it's a very critical social component to the service we provide.

Mayor Kurtz said it's rebranding. I agree with that. You are faced with something that provides a service. You know, mental health has such a rainbow effect. It is so dynamic and so fragile at the same time. The 25 and Alive, a number of people, she can give a testimonial of how the impact it has had on people's lives, not necessarily savings lives all the times. Sometimes you just regenerate or you create purpose in someone's life by some of these programs and some of the attention that is given to these young people. It's just not the young people, it's the parents too. It's been a dynamic program, and I am glad you brought that up because I forgot about it. Thank you. If you listen to her, it will be very compelling and convincing. Again, we can talk about some of these detailed issues in the future. It's great to be in a community where you have some flexibility.

Councilperson Trakas said I'm looking forward to that discussion Mayor.

When we were talking about the Civic Center, have we filled the social worker position?

Mayor Kurtz said no. Right now, I told the team this morning, the first quarter for me has just been just like look and see and just try to get a flavor as well as address all of these daily issues that just constantly; and I told every Department Head, look, and they are all at a different point on the pendulum. Some are at the end of their career. Some are at the beginning of their career, and a lot of them are swinging that way; and it's like I told them look, for the first three months, I am just looking for a commitment to the community, developing trust and everyone has family dynamics that become a priority for them, which none of us are going to find fault with that. Their lives change, and their commitment to this community changes because of their personal well-being and their personal priority and their family. We have that. We have people at the end of their careers that need support to have someone backfilled. So, we can have continuity in service and serviceability. I told them all, look maybe this isn't the right fit for everyone; and there are people out there by the way, communities out there every day. You think they are stealing customers all the time. They are stealing people all the time too, as is evidenced by the two firefighters we just lost. I would like to say that it's only because of the location, but there are always these other dynamics going on in people's personal lives that create this new normal. So, people are coming and going. You know what, I tell people this, if your life can be enhanced by a different environment for you, God bless you. I truly believe, every time we have a situation, we found a new and better way to do business. It compels you to do that, and that's the dynamic we face in the City of Independence like every place else.

We try to explore and expose to this Council that look this is a dynamic thing, it's moving. We need to adjust and be nimble because things change constantly.

Councilperson Trakas said I think the community did use that person in the past.

Finance Director Blaze said so then after the Mayor's Court, we have some totals there, and then SCM&R, that's actually a subset of the Service Director's responsibility, which is why it goes back to the statement earlier of Police, Fire and Service, followed by Rec are the top four departments as far as expenditures. The SCM&R is a significant part of the Service Department. One of the big lines there is the salt supplies line. We are not proposing any changes yet; we are not out of the woods yet. We are still in the month of February, and we kind of noticed the last

couple of springs, winter seems to have been pushed back; and instead of getting the vast majority of our snow in December, January and February, last year was more of a January, February and March. It pushed the start of spring even back, and then it pushed the start of summer back. So, we are just being conservative to say the final approved budget for salt was \$460,000 in 2019. We have dropped that by \$120,000; and we are comfortable keeping it there now. If there are any adjustments upward or downward, we can always come to Council and adjust accordingly sometime this year.

You have the total down at the bottom of Page 13, and that pretty much covers what's generally referred to as the Operating Budget.

The subsequent pages from 14 on presented in the same departments, in the same order; but it just has less categories. Then the final page on the bottom of Page 18 is just labeled Summary. It's just for somebody who wants to see, how much did the City spend in wages, overtime, medical and pension and all the other departments combined. So, we basically have presented the Operating Budget actuals, the proposed three different ways, line by line, in each department which we just reviewed for the last 90 minutes. Then a summary by some categories, and then the final one, not by department but just by total to see for example wages have been just actual between, and then it went up and then went down in 2019 and where they are projected to go for 2020.

So, the Mayor and I and Maggie will have to take feedback from this body if you think we need to spend more time on this next Tuesday, or if you have a comfort factor now; and either (a) choose not to meet next Tuesday, or meet to maybe review a little bit of some of the other funds that we talked about like 25 and Alive. Economic Development has a fund, and the incentives, and the attraction grants and the retention grants are journaled through there. We could possibly talk about the Rainy Day Fund, Self Insurance Fund. There are other funds that are critical to the City's operations, but technically not part of what is considered the day-to-day Operating Budget.

I think it's fair game, but everybody has different schedules. Traditionally, I don't believe Council has spent a lot of time on those other funds. Maybe you have gone through this process that we have gone through a few times; but not so much in the other funds. Again, I am not saying I am doing things better, I am just proposing sometimes different things, and if Council does want to talk about any of those funds just I mentioned earlier and the other ones, next Tuesday might be a good time to do that. That's your call.

That's all we really have as far as that Agenda Item 2 on the agenda there Vice Mayor Grendel. If there are any questions, we will take them. If not, it's your call given that it's 7:00 p.m. if you want to go to that Agenda Item Number 3.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I know we talked last week about having a two hour meeting. I think that's probably a good idea because just after two hours sometimes you aren't as productive.

As far as the Capital Purchase Plan, I think Kenn you still had some questions.

Councilperson Synek said I have some information to share with you on that if you want to do that, or if we are going to meet next week.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I think we feel comfortable with the Investment Policy that we talked about last week, and we can vote on that. At least I am comfortable, we have done way more than in the past as far as the budget goes. Before John would just tell a certain percentage, and we felt comfortable; and it worked really.

I think as far as if we wanted to take a little break, we could approve the Five Year in April even too, and maybe take a little break and meet up a little bit later in March. I know Kenn you are busy.

Councilperson Synek asked the Five Year?

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I mean the Capital Purchasing Program.

Councilperson Synek asked do you just want to table that? It won't be on next month's agenda.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said we talked about it.

Mayor Kurtz said it doesn't affect our operations.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel replied yes, and I'm thinking that maybe we will take a little break.

Finance Director Blaze said it's on First Reading, it won't die until December 31st, so you have all year to act on it.

Councilperson Trakas said 2021, really technically it's 2021.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I know Kenn you had a few comments and things.

Councilperson Synek replied yes.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I think to do it justice, it might be good to have one meeting to do that maybe, and then we can get this budget approved. I tell you the time is precious as far as my schedule is concerned as far as taxes.

Mayor Kurtz said we will accommodate anything that Council. As long as these are going to be on the agenda to get approved at the Council, we can just hold off on the capital, it's not going to affect us from an operation standpoint. If it creates more dialogue, we can all learn and be better prepared for the future. I have no reservation. If we can get these done at the March Council meeting, we can keep flying ahead.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said definitely now that we have the job descriptions, a little better idea of what the plan is, and also the same way, the appropriations, I think we have an

excellent idea as far as a handle on that. That's been part of our explanation over the past, not that it was wrong or anything; but now we have a better understanding as a Council, as a group. So, I think we are set for the March meeting.

Councilperson Synek said I have a question for the Finance Director. So, after our last meeting for this committee, we had some proposed changes to that Investment Policy. Have you updated that? Is that document ready so you could give it back to us now?

Finance Director Blaze said not yet. We have transitioned to getting this one ready, but we know we have to get that to you in order for you to vote on it in two weeks from today. That's if we are kind of good here, and we are not going to put anything in the Planned Capital ordinance until maybe after the budget passed; and we will sit down get those little tweaks done.

Councilperson Synek said the committee hasn't seen that final difference, so the committee can't recommend it because we haven't seen the final version.

Finance Director Blaze said outside of the change in the tense of one word, and a couple of grammatical things; it's really just that one section as far as the ORC and making sure that it's not.

Councilperson Synek said I was just curious to know where that was at, if it was ready to be passed out.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said you will probably have time Vern to get that to us.

Mayor Kurtz asked pass it out next week?

Finance Director Blaze said that will be the goal, yeah.

Mayor Kurtz said we will get it out.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said so the only thing we are delaying Mayor will be just the Planned Capital Purchase Program and maybe push that out for about a month or so.

Councilperson Trakas asked do you want to do it in May so that you guys can prepare taxes?

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said that's why I can put more energy into it.

Finance Director Blaze said they will be so whipped, they are going to need May to take off.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said just like I would hope that, my suggestion for Chris is that to take our tour of the buildings and everything like we did in the past too and get some ideas, maybe after we get this study to come back; and we can take a look and see.

Mayor, I know that it's somewhere really down the road, but I would like to see like Westlake and what communities have as far as modern Service Department garages and that just to see.

We are investing so much money in these trucks and this equipment and everything, I would like to see them housed properly so they can give us a full long life.

Finance Director Blaze said Leon will be glad to take anybody to Westlake. I went out there.

Mayor Kurtz said it's impressive.

Finance Director Blaze said their building is actually a number of years old, I would doubt that there has been something built since then that would be even more advanced than that one. One I could think of is Beachwood. They did one in the last ten years, and their main focus was to get all of their equipment enclosed.

Mayor Kurtz said absolutely, it's worth seeing, and the technology, even in the last 12 years when they built theirs, the technology and the different amenities that you could add to that in terms of like the Fire Department talked to me after we exposed that opportunity. They talked about well we would have a place big enough to be able to repair our large apparatus, Fire trucks. I said absolutely, that could be one bay of this building. You just don't have to work on dump trucks, you could work on Fire engines. With the right technology and technicians, you would be capable of doing everything if you have the facility.

By the way, the one facility that I was looking at as a backup plan for the City was the County sewer building on Canal Road. Metroparks got that.

Councilperson Trakas asked is the ODOT thing still in play?

Mayor Kurtz said oh yeah, it's still in play. I have sent them a letter, and they are going to get back to me and tell me what the cost would be to do something with that property; but again, that's not a long term solution, that's just a north end.

There are so many balls in the air, it's exciting at the same time. We have a lot of different things, and we will be talking about some of them in the next week or two or three for sure at the Council meeting at the latest.

Finance Director Blaze said that brings something to mind then, and this would be the appropriate time to ask. If we ended up purchasing that ODOT property, or any of the other properties that we have been talking about; I know we lost the one next door, the tudor house. I believe you talked to Council about some strategic property acquisitions, and there is a line, it doesn't show up in the accounts; but there's a line since it hasn't been used, about land acquisition and just could maybe take Council's temperature about us throwing in an appropriation on a line item for land acquisition instead of having to, you bring a deal and then we have to go and amend the budget to be able to swing the deal. It would be a little bit of pro-action here, hey let's throw "x" amount of dollars on this line because whether we are doing something with the schools or we are doing something with ODOT or doing something strategic. I believe you got approval to get that one house on Brecksville Road before the Chase Bank appraised; if we pursue that. There are different land acquisition opportunities maybe brewing; so maybe this would help things.

Mayor Kurtz said to have \$500,000 in seed money.

Finance Director Blaze said we will take the direction from this table here.

Mayor Kurtz said it's not going to get us to the promised land, but at least it gets some ancillary issues potentially taken care of. Again, you are the only body that can buy and sell property anyways. So, it always has to come back to Council, but if we have some seed money, at least we know we have something. So, it gives us some flexibility. It's your call. Again, it won't be enough to do any major things, just enough if we pick up one of these less strategic. Well, they are strategic, but they are less costly issues.

Councilperson Narduzzi said but every one of them can serve a purpose too.

Mayor Kurtz said absolutely. They are going to provide some advantage to the City in mitigating a situation, whether it be a safety or appearance issue.

Councilperson Trakas said it would be my opinion that we would do it on a case by case basis because then you don't get someone to look and say they have all this money in this fund or I can go this high or this low or whatever. It's just my own opinion, but I would fund that as it needed to be.

Mayor Kurtz said okay.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I kind of agree with Jim. This way, we can have a handle on it.

Councilperson Narduzzi said it's not a deal breaker, it's just money in the account.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked anything else? If not, I will entertain a motion to adjourn.

Moved by Veverka, seconded by Grendel to adjourn the Finance Committee Meeting of February 25, 2020. Voice Vote: 3 yes/0 no; motion carried.

There being no further business to discuss, the Finance Committee Meeting was adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

The Finance Committee meeting of February 25, 2020 was reconvened by Chairman Vice Mayor Dave Grendel at 7:13 p.m.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked for a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss legal issues.

Moved by Grendel, seconded by Veverka, to go in Executive Session to discuss legal issues. Voice Vote: 6 yes/0 no; motion carried.

The Executive Session was convened at 7:18 p.m.

Moved by Synek, seconded by Veverka, to adjourn the Executive Session and reconvene the Finance Committee meeting. Voice Vote: 6 yes/0 no; motion carried.

The Executive Session was adjourned at 8:20 p.m., and the Finance Committee meeting was reconvened.

Moved by Grendel, seconded by Synek, to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting of February 25, 2020. Voice Vote: 3 yes/0 no; motion carried.

The Finance Committee meeting of February 25, 2020 was then adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Debra J. Beal, Clerk of Council
Minutes Unapproved at Time of Release 02/27/20
