

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE
UTILITIES & SEWERS COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
FEBRUARY 25, 2021 AT 3:00 P.M.
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM**

Present: Chairman James Trakas
Councilperson Kenn Synek (arrived at 3:16 p.m.)
Councilperson Dale Veverka

Also Present: Councilperson Kathleen Kapusta
Councilperson Chris Walchanowicz
Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz
Finance Director Vern Blaze
City Engineer Don Ramm
Mary Cierebiej, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission
Patrick Hewitt, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission
Alison Ball, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission
Dan Meaney, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission
Jan Rybka, Cuyahoga County Soil & Water District
Jared Bartley, Cuyahoga County Soil & Water District

Chairman Trakas called the Utilities & Sewers Committee virtual meeting of February 25, 2021 to order at 3:01 p.m.

Chairman Trakas said when the others come in, they will be able to participate because we do have a quorum present.

We want to thank everybody for joining us today. On today's agenda is Resolution 2020-19, and we have a presentation from some really talented guests. Mary and her team with the County Planning Commission; and at this time, if it's okay Mary, I will kind of turn it over to you if you wouldn't mind introducing some of your experts and then opine as you will. We would be happy to hear anything and everything you have to say about tree canopies, the County Study process.

So, this ordinance has been pending for several months, and the Council and Mayor Kurtz asked for more information about the concept of why you would want to, what is a tree canopy, why we would want to increase it if we do; and we have legislation on that topic which you could opine about or not depending on what you would like to do. Certainly, to educate us as to what these efforts are, and I know that Holden Arboretum just sent out an e-mail talking about how this is important as well. If it's okay with the committee, we will turn it over to Mary, and we welcome you to Independence. It's a great place to visit, even virtually.

Mayor Kurtz said I would just like to have some clarification. I see three Mary's. Will the real Mary please speak up?

Mary Cierebiej said it's because I shared the link that they are coming up as me, so I apologize for that.

Ms. Cierebiej said thank you for inviting us to speak with you today, we are really excited about the topic. I know there have been some e-mails shared back and forth, but I am Mary Cierebiej. I am the new Executive Director of the Cuyahoga Planning Commission. Today with me I have from our team at County Planning Patrick Hewitt, Alison Ball and Dan Meaney. Then from our friends at Soil & Water Conservation District we have Jared Bartley and Jan Rybka. So, we really appreciate the time. We want to discuss tree canopies, and why they are important to our communities, what the data is telling us right now and how we can best support you in your efforts to increase the tree canopy in Independence.

So, we will take some turns going through slides, but first we will start with Jan and Jared; and we will go through there. We should have enough time for questions and answers. If we are on a slide that you have questions about, please don't hesitate to stop. We want to make sure this a dialogue, and we get as much information across to you as we can. We will make sure we share these slides with you afterwards so you have them electronically.

Jared Bartley said I shared my screen. I will forward on, when you want me to go to the next screen, please don't hesitate to tell me that in advance.

Ms. Cierebiej said I think Jared's kicking off, so go ahead.

Jan Rybka said I think the City of Independence should know us after all these years that we have been working with you at the Cuyahoga County Soil & Water Conservation District. We have been in existence since 1949, so arguably the oldest environmental organization in the County. We have been working specifically with Independence to help you implement your public involvement and public education program and also your erosion and sediment control and post-construction stormwater runoff programs; and that's under the Clean Water mandate, the MS-4 permit that you have through the Ohio EPA.

Our mission is to have programs and practices that protect and restore soil, healthy soil and water resources; and of course, we really, truly believe in the benefits of trees and have been promoting and advocating for trees since before I was on board, and that's a long time.

So, Jared is going to pick it up from here, the benefits of trees.

Mr. Bartley said obviously you guys are interested in expanding the tree canopy there; so you are aware of some of the benefits, we look at it from a stormwater benefit as well and not just from the aesthetic. We usually think of cleaning the air kind of benefit.

Trees are the original green infrastructure when it comes to stormwater management, so a lot of intercepting that rainwater, infiltrating into the ground. We have been involved with this, and through our involvement with the City through our public education public involvement programs under the stormwater like Jan had mentioned. We have been getting some educational information out into the community. Our targeted mailing every spring went out to 274

households in the community on proper planting and care for new trees. Through our program, we actually have five more brochures on the various stages of tree care. These have been made available in different ways through either mailings to the community, households in the community, or available in City Hall for residents to pick up those kind of things. When we have had events, obviously those have been few and far between in the last year.

So, that's one of the keys we have is education, educating the residents, but also community as well. Really the proper way to plan, select, plant and care for these trees.

Like I said, the reason behind that is really to manage stormwater. It is our mission in addition to the other benefits as we stated. It really helps as we said intercept, infiltrate and store stormwater and rainwater, especially if they are in an environment where we can intercept it before it even hits a lot of the hard parking lot and pervious surfaces.

Independence does have a pretty good tree canopy in a lot of places. You guys are familiar with the benefits of the aesthetics, and additionally you have cooling, shade, lower energy costs and the habitat that it provides for nature, animals, especially valuable along stream corridors to help prevent erosion and things like that as well.

Dan Meaney said if we could pause a second on this slide, (inaudible) on tree canopy. They are measuring with satellite imagery and other sources on a per square foot basis for the entire County. They inventoried all the different kind of fixed land coverage, whether it be tree canopy, grass, pavement, buildings, and so on. Then we were able to quantify that and kind of geography down to the parcel level all the way up to the whole city, and then the county as a whole. As we go through this, you will get a feel for that.

I should mention that we did two studies, one in 2013 and one in 2019; so as a result of that, we know not just the latest standards, but we know the change of where we are losing trees, mostly losing and where we have studied. You will see that.

Here's some quick findings for Independence. So, the existing tree canopy coverage is about 40% of the area of the City; so it's about 22nd out of 59 communities in the County. So, doing fairly well; and there are similar canopy percentages found in other outer ring suburbs, so Westlake, Olmsted Township, Broadview Heights, Solon, Strongsville.

Chairman Trakas asked would you mind just defining what goes into a tree canopy, not everybody may be familiar with what that definition is.

Mr. Meaney said there is some formal definition, the layer of essentially leaves that (inaudible) above, leaves that are obscuring the ground. There is also a height minimum when the measurement is actually done, the analysis; so I think it has to be 8 feet tall or taller. It has to be a certain circumference for an individual tree. I think it has to be six feet wide. So, it's really considered a land cover type. The other ones are just plain grass when seen from above or pavement, buildings and so on that I mentioned. Does that make sense?

Chairman Trakas said yes.

Councilperson Kapusta said besides the obvious things of trees dying or trees being cut down for roads, houses, buildings, things like that, what other causes might there be of reduction in the tree canopy?

Mr. Meaney said I think you hit each of them. Go ahead Mary.

Ms. Rybka said I was going to say you are looking at the Emerald Ash borer. We had the gypsy moth problem, and there are just a lot of tree diseases coming down the pike. Then also our climate is changing. We are getting warmer, and that's going to affect some of the hardier trees that won't be able to adapt to the extra warm weather. So, right now there's been a lot of studies. I think Holden Arboretum has a list that encompasses trees that they are projecting are going to do better in the forthcoming years.

Councilperson Kapusta said thank you.

Mr. Meaney said so we were talking about how Independence compares to other similar communities. The next bullet is about the net loss of about 8% of the tree canopy in Independence. It's 22nd out of the communities. We saw about who lost more or less. Oddly enough, communities that have a lot of tree cover often lost a large amount in some of the big forests, in the Metroparks and such. We also saw big losses due to development which I will mention in a second here.

So, I mentioned the gross loss, that is not including any small amounts of gain there were, but there was a loss of about 350 acres throughout Independence in total. It was a bit less than some of the other communities around you.

Councilperson Veverka said quick question. In the fact that Independence is bordered by the National Park, is that considered part of the Independence tree cover, or do you basically look at the actual area of Independence that's not National Park?

Mr. Meaney said whatever is in Independence. So, it does include a portion of the National Park I believe.

Councilperson Veverka said thank you.

Mr. Meaney said so one set of kind of manmade contributors to losses were development, and I kind of scanned around the City, and you would be able to do this on your own with our online map, specific areas of loss. So, there were 20 acres in one area of development, another 8.5 on Brecksville Road. We will look at some of these in a second. So, you can see it really even you will see at the end where single residence clearing was. There was 2.5 acres for one home, and big chunks of land. To maybe make you feel better, in other areas we found losses of single areas of 40 or 50 acres. The potential tree canopy, and I will show you a graph in a second. So, what area is remaining that it could be planted, more trees could be planted? You really need to look at the grassy areas; so you can't really plant where there are buildings, inverted parking lots, planting some trees in parking lots. You have to really look at the grassy areas. So, 34% of the land in the City is what they call grass, shrub. So, a fair amount of area left to eventually grow

additional trees on. As somebody brought up, a good amount, 16% of the Independence land is in parks, so that's 9th among all the communities in the County. So, quite a bit, as I will mention in a couple of minutes; it's both an opportunity and a limitation because it's maybe difficult to change policy and say you want to plant trees here. As I mentioned, it was also susceptible to larger losses, especially the Emerald Ash borer is the one we saw.

Here's a couple of those examples.

Mayor Kurtz said I have a question. Does that include all the boundary of the National Park, or is that just the park because not all of the property in the park is park land today. So, are you identifying it as park because the Engineer used to tell me that the National Park took 21% of our raw acreage.

Mr. Meaney said we took the parcels, it was the park boundary as the National Park defines their boundary, and everything within that is the acreage that we counted.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you.

Mr. Meaney said so here's some of what you can see with the online map that we have set up. So, these (inaudible) are areas where the tree canopy was lost. This is that 20 acre development on Great Oaks Parkway. So, there's a quick example there.

Here's that single property that lost 2.5 acres for an extra long driveway and such. I just wanted to point out a couple of those; and if you are able to get on the online viewer, you can see these areas.

So, here's a little graphic to show the components of tree canopy, and it really the components of the land cover; so the green bar is the existing tree canopy. These are percentages, they all add up 100%. The lighter green is grassy areas, and then the pink is impervious, mainly parking lots, and the something we call non-suitable. So, those are mainly buildings that cannot be planted over. So, you can see some of the difference in the patterns. So, Bentleyville topped with the most tree canopy. It does not have as much additional plantable area because they have so many trees already. Other areas, we can't see at the bottom, but the other extreme is (inaudible) and also very little grassy area. They are really hemmed in with their potential for increasing their tree canopy. Independence does have a good amount of grassy areas as we mentioned earlier.

So, we looked at a few areas where you might have potential for planting, especially if the areas are in the City's control. So, you do have this nice community complex which I believe is parks and schools. Obviously, you wouldn't want to plant trees on top of your baseball field or your football field and such; but there's quite a bit of additional areas that could be filled in a bit more, some of the walking areas and such. So, quite a bit of land there to work with and to consider.

I mentioned limitations in other areas in that first set there; so it may be difficult to get trees planted in the National Park. Utility corridors are also a big landowner within the City or use at least; and there are some limitations with tree planting there. Although I think they do allow for shorter trees. I am not sure of what the policy is on that.

So, thinking about rights-of-way; so this is one area that the City does control and can have direct impact. I am not sure the graphic here shows up that well, but there's definitely a lack of tree canopy within the rights-of-way, and I will say Rockside Road and even Brecksville Road. This is kind of maybe a typical residential street with very little tree cover; so those tree lawns and such for sure would be targets.

If you think about development sites as to whether you want to push for protection there or not. So, this is the former Marycrest School I believe on Brookside Road. So, you might be careful when considering if there is a redevelopment on that site to do your best to preserve or enhance tree cover on that open property.

I just want to mention if you go back real quick, in terms of other opportunities, one site that we did not show, and I meant too is there's a large amount of City owned property just south of Hemlock Trail, above the Haydite mine. There is quite a bit of City owned property there, and a good bit of it is open land. That's certainly a potential site.

Patrick Hewitt said the links to the viewer and other resources are going to be on the last slide of this presentation; so when we send it out, you will be able to click on that, and it will take you to some of those resources that Dan mentioned.

I will very briefly talk about tree canopy and landscape ordinances. Your zoning and development regulations as Dan kind of eluded to are a really great way of protecting and maintaining existing tree canopy when new development happens; and there are a lot of different way that zoning and development regulations can play a role in preserving tree canopy. These are just five examples. This is from the American Planning Association, they have great resources as you are considering any zoning or ordinance changes; but some of these examples include first on site landscaping. So, of course, when new development happens, cities typically have on site landscaping requirements so that it might be a percent of total area that must be covered by landscaping. So, looking at that percent and seeing whether or not the tree canopy coverage that is required, either as a percent of total area or as a number of trees and shrubs; for instance, dwelling unit, whether or not that number still is meeting your targets and goals.

The second area that you can improve tree canopy coverage as part of your development regulations is in buffering and screening. So, typically when you have two land uses adjacent to each other that are different, say a residential development adjacent to a commercial development, there will typically be requirements for buffering and screening. That's another area where you can look to see whether or not that screening is allowing trees as part of that buffer, and whether or not you can increase the number of trees that are required as part of those buffers.

Street trees are another good example. Obviously, requiring street trees as part of new developments is an important way of adding tree canopy coverage as development is occurring and making sure that the tree canopy coverage is being maintained over time.

A fourth way, parking lot landscaping; and Dan mentioned this as potential impervious areas, but parking lots are a big part of our land use, especially in suburban communities. So, looking at

whether or not additional trees can be required when parking lots are being constructed, and this can take the place of perimeter trees, so the area around parking lots as well as interior tree requirements. Often communities will base the number of required trees on the number of spaces, or the percent of total lot area. Sometimes communities will also limit it to large parking lots; so over 10 spaces you start to get requirements for trees as part of parking lot developments.

Finally, and probably one of the largest tools is the tree preservation ordinance. These ordinances vary widely, and they can be either mandatory or encouraged; but again there are a variety of ways of structuring these regulations. Some examples include requiring the replacement of removed trees; so if a development occurs and there needs to be the removal of trees to make way for that development requiring that those trees are replaced somewhere else, either on site or off site, the payment for tree removal based on the size of tree. So, the tree that is very large is removed versus a tree that is very small is removed. There are prices associated with those trees that a developer might have to pay in order to remove that, it can go into a tree fund; they can fund the planting of trees elsewhere.

Or the preservation of trees that are not necessary for development. This can take the place of conservation ordinances for instance, making sure that if a development is occurring, the trees aren't clear cut on the entire parcel, but only those trees that are necessary to be removed are removed.

Those are just a few examples of zoning and development regulations that can play a role in preserving and enhancing tree canopy coverage in a community.

I think this is back to Jan or Jared.

Ms. Rybka said first I want to say congratulations to Independence. We read that 19 years in a row Tree City USA, so that's excellent; and that sounds like you have a plan in place. You have the Tree Commission, which when we were kind of going through to prepare for this, we couldn't find any notes on the Tree Commission. We might not have been looking in the right place. So, certainly all of us on the call today applaud you for what you are doing related to the tree canopy and your goals; and they are ambitious for sure. You heard about how much tree canopy was lost, and I just did a quick search on the web; and in a typical acre, depending on how far apart you plant trees or how far apart trees are located, about 400 trees an acre. So, figure for every acre of trees lost, it will take about 400 trees to be replanted. The trees as you heard from Dan, are typically not going to be those huge trees that are 8 feet tall and have a beautiful canopy on them. It's going to take then a while to get there.

So, anyway, when we develop these slides, it was just before we saw on here congratulations on the 19 years with the Tree City USA; so I am just going to go over these really quick. Having a plan, and Alan Siewert the urban forester with the Department of Natural Resources will always tell the arborists and foresters every year the most important thing is to have a plan. That plan would be looking at your tree canopy and looking at your street trees, especially in those public lands and assessing those trees to determine which ones need to be treated, which ones need to be pruned, which ones need to be removed. Alan always suggests that you take care of the worst case scenario first before you go planting. It almost seems counter-intuitive, but he said if you

have a plan and taking care and maintaining those trees, those trees that you have, you are going to get rid of the worst of them, the dead trees or diseased trees; and you are going to prune and care for those and nurture the trees that you have so that they do survive over time and you keep that canopy intact and then you plant the new trees.

So, this may not be the situation in Independence because you have larger lots, but certainly in places in the City of Cleveland and some other areas, the tree lawns are so tiny. So, the trees that were planted may have been the right tree at the right time; but sidewalks have gotten wider because of ADA requirements. You can see what has happened to this poor tree. It's really doesn't have a whole lot of room to grow. So, it's always important to make sure that the people you entrust with taking care of your trees, and I believe that's your Service Director right now, that it's the right tree at the right place.

One of the things that we have seen, and Independence plans to apply for the grant funds to the County's Healthy Urban Tree Canopy Grant Program this year, that one of the things that our agency is charged with is going out to monitor how those trees are planted because sadly what happens is, and this is something we would really, really encourage the City to do, that when you bid, if you are planting street trees or right-of-way trees and you are awarding a contract, ensure that whoever that firm is that is going to be the contractor planting the trees, that they plant those trees correctly. This shows a tree that was probably balled and burlaped, so think of a tree that's wrapped in burlap and it has the wire cages around it; more often than not, the West Shoreway a couple of a years ago case in point, trees that were planted at taxpayer cost that died within one year. Those trees when they are being planted, the hole has to be dug correctly. The soil amendment has to be placed in there. Those trees have to be taken out of the wire cage, taken out of the burlap, and the trees need to be spread out, splayed out so that when they go, when it's planted; now mind you the tree is already in shock, especially the larger they are. Those trees have to be set in the ground and given the best opportunity to grow. So, planting, having good planting, best management practices is really, really important.

You can see how the size, you don't want to have it too large, but you don't want to have it too small, the hole; and you definitely don't want to have that tree planted below the crown. When we were kids, and we drew the trees, and the trees came down like that. You don't want to plant it and mulch above where those roots start coming up at the tree.

So, this is just another example, and especially with trees when they are planted, it's going to take about 1 to 3 years, especially in urban settings, to make sure those trees are going to have a chance to grow. So, they are going to require water for those first 3 years and making sure that the mulch is there because that mulch is going to help keep the weeds away and it's going to help keep that ground cooler and help absorb the water and keep it around those tree roots. So, that's a really important practice.

Like anything that we do, whether we buy a home, there's always maintenance required. Just don't put the tree and go away; and here you can see how these trees were mulched. Again, kind of in a donut fashion, the mulch isn't coming right up to the bark of the tree and maintaining it. Going out and checking it a couple times during the year to make sure that the weeds and other

debris is not growing in that mulch's place. The mulch is going to have to be replaced periodically.

Councilperson Veverka asked and you don't need to have the mulch up to the trunk, you need to have a space there?

Ms. Rybka said right. So, here's a graphic. So, we say no to volcano mulching. So, you have probably seen that on commercial properties, as well as people's private property; but you could see the proper way to do it is kind of a donut fashion so that the tree, the base of the tree has some ability to breathe.

Here's just an example, the picture in the upper left-hand corner, what happens because that tree was volcano mulched over and over; it actually rotted out the tree, and the tree fell over. So, again think about your maintenance, prepare a plan, proper planting should be done first, proper mulching, water, pruning at the appropriate time of the year. I am a terrible pruner. There's a proper way to prune, and weeding the roots and making sure you have rich soil and good mulch and removing the debris and the dead branches and dead trees when you need to.

I think if you are a Tree City USA, you probably are already using good industry standards. I think Alan Siewert, and every time I have heard him speak he has talked about the value of arborists, whether they are on staff or consulting arborists, establishing a Tree Commission is great. Certainly, the Cuyahoga County Soil and Water Conservation District is happy to come out and provide education for folks on your Tree Commission. I don't know who is on your Tree Commission, but a lot of those Tree Commissions do have interested people from the community there, and there's been a lot of training, tree stewards training, so there are a lot of people out there who are very, very strong advocates for trees; and they really want to be a part of good practice in the communities.

Councilperson Veverka said we have an arborist in our community, and I know he has come and done a presentation at our church facility to show proper pruning techniques and some other valuable things. So, we do have that advantage of an individual within our own community as a starting point.

Ms. Rybka said excellent, and I just had to leave my presentation with a little plug for something because I just sent a letter out to the Mayor today. Our Board just approved starting a Memorial Tree Planting Fund, and we want to work with a handful of communities; we are going to raise money, and we are going to work with communities to help plant trees in those communities where we would be doing most of the work, but we want it to be a partnership. Again, for every acre, trees that are lost, it's going to take a lot of trees; and Independence has a very ambitious goal, and if we can help you with this by partnering on this program, we would be delighted to do that.

So, that's all that I have for right now.

Ms. Cierebiej said I am going to turn it over to Alison Ball.

Alison Ball said thank you all. I am with the County Planning Commission, and run the Healthy Urban Tree Canopy Grant Program along with our partners at Cuyahoga Soil & Water Conservation District, the County Department of Sustainability and the Cuyahoga County Board of Health.

So, the Cuyahoga County Healthy Urban Tree Canopy Grant got started in 2019; that was our first year of the program. The program is to increase tree canopy and help us in the impact of climate change. The County Executive announced this right after we published the climate change action plan; so this addressing one of the items in the climate change action plan. The program goals are to add large scaling planting, expand tree canopy in areas that are vulnerable, establish new tree canopy, protect existing tree canopy and establish the plans and policies that promote tree canopy.

So, just to recap the program in year one, we funded a lot of planning projects. So, there were 14 plans, that's the second bullet point, for future planting work that identified areas to plant trees, species to plant; and you know small, large and medium sized areas for growing canopy. In addition, the program planted over 1,400 trees, and over 14,500 planting sites have been identified. We also completed a business plan for a non-profit tree nursery so you can get your new trees right here in the County.

I have already been in touch with somebody this morning from your community who is working the grant for Independence, but there are 2 types of grants that we are funding; and it's planting grants, and planting grants will fund planting, associated activities that preserve and expand tree canopy in Cuyahoga County such as the mulching and watering and purchasing the trees. We are also still funding plans. If you didn't get a chance to get a good tree plan, we will fund the activities to develop the inventories, the urban forestry plans that include potential planting sites; however, all planning grants this year must incorporate a planting component to jump start your plan. This isn't just a planting program, it's about growing canopy, just not planting trees. So, you can plant them, but we have to maintain them and make sure that they grow to maturity because you are not going to get that canopy for a couple of years, maybe 10 I think.

Tree City USA is a program that Independence is already affiliated with. It is locally administered by the Ohio Division of Natural Resources, but this is a program that was started back in 1976 to help protect and expand tree canopy. It is run through the Arbor Day Foundation, and the Tree City USA does provide a basic framework. So, in order to become a Tree City, the cities have to meet 4 standards, and that's to start a Tree Board or Department or Commission. I believe that the Service Department serves as your Tree Department. A Tree Care Ordinance is a second standard, and the third is a community forestry program with an annual budget of at least \$2.00 per capita for your population, and an Arbor Day observance and proclamation. So, again, I went on to the Tree City USA site, and I was looking at the cities that have them, and there was Independence. You guys were written up for your 19 years of being a Tree City USA by Cleveland.com. That article is from 2019. So, congratulations.

Ms. Rybka asked can I just add 2 more things really quickly? It goes back to the City's goals. The Arbor Day newsletter that just came to me yesterday, they highlighted the City of Spokane, Washington; and they were recognized for their tree canopy goals, but also because they have a

history of supporting tree planting by providing free trees to residents. Everything that the Cleveland Tree Commission has looked at, and even all these other cities, is that planting on public lands alone is not going to restore the canopy. We really need to encourage private property owners to plant trees and maintain them, especially like Alison Ball said, that it's going to take a while for these trees to grow and to provide that canopy coverage. That may be something in the future that Independence wants to think about. Again, it goes back to your whole planning process and how do you do that and what kind of trees would you provide, but I am sure it could factor into the cost for maintaining that Tree City USA.

One more commercial, and Jared maybe you want to talk about the N.U.T.S. Program. I think you guys will like this one.

Mr. Bartley said N.U.T.S. stands for Native Urban Tree Starter, but it's a program that we do with schools where we basically use acorns and other seeds or nuts that the students collect, and they grow a tree in the classroom; and they are either able to take it home and plant it or plant it in another location in the community. It's just another way that we are working with schools throughout the County to really try to enhance tree canopy.

Ms. Cierebiej said that's all the information we had to share. We want to definitely have some time, I think we have some time left for questions and answers. As Patrick said, we have a resource slides here so when you get this, you will be able to click onto that. There's a lot of great information out there, and again I think Jan said it, you have a lofty goal, and we are here to help. I think we will open it up for questions, discussion.

Chairman Trakas said Mary thank you so much to your team. What an excellent presentation and very impressive. It's always nice to know you are getting your tax dollars' worth out of all of these things, right? You guys did a tremendous job. We can't thank you enough. I know my colleague Dale has a question. I had one quick question before I called on Councilperson Veverka. Could you describe the difference between the types of trees that are trees that you are looking for that would be comprehensive and appropriate for a tree canopy. I know obviously there are ornamental trees, I don't think they do a whole heck of a lot; but the City plants its own trees in tree lawns. We may be expanding that program. Mayor Kurtz has suggested that idea. What specific types of trees are we looking at to actually increase the tree canopy, and are there trees that don't do that and we should avoid?

Mr. Bartley said you hit it right on the head a little bit. So, some of those smaller ornamental trees aren't going to provide us much canopy when they are mature as a larger species might. You are thinking an oak or maple or something; however, going back to some of the slides Jan presented, you want to make sure you are getting the right tree in the right place. So, if the tree lawn is really narrow or something, it's really not going to support a larger tree; and the other thing to consider when talking about the urban forest, we put a lot of emphasis on canopy and cover, but you also want to make sure that it's a healthy urban forest; so you want to make sure you have a variety of different species. We obviously have a preference for native species where possible, but a lot of times arborists, especially for those street trees in tight spaces, find that some of the non-native trees are a better fit there. It really just depends on the setting and the

soil conditions. It really is a site-by-site determination. From a canopy standpoint, those larger trees are going to be more bang for the buck eventually. It's going to take decades.

Chairman Trakas said understood, and just as a follow up to that, do you have, we have over 100 different soils I think in Independence. Do you have any type of a soil analysis and trees that work in soils, any type of resource guide that we can utilize?

Mr. Bartley said we don't have anything specific where it just pulls up this tree in this soil. Any arborist you are working with would definitely have that information, be able to make those determinations. It's not just the soil type, there is a lot of stuff that goes into it.

Ms. Cierebiej said Dale has a book apparently.

Councilperson Veverka said this was a title that passed on to me. It's called Trees for Urban and Suburban Landscape, and it does a very comprehensive job. I passed basic information from that along to our City Engineer a while back. We have had discussions in the past about how ineffective it tends to be to try to plant trees in the devil's strip or whatever; and one of our conversations that we had is the idea of trying to work with property owners so the City can provide the tree, work with the property owner for the most appropriate location so it doesn't block the view or anything else, and plant an appropriate tree that could be a large substantial canopy tree on the person's property. We would plant it and mind it in the beginning; and then the property owner would then be responsible for taking care of it. In my mind's eye, that's a perfect opportunity. I know that the Engineer, we just did a major road project down Brookside Road, and I know there are a number of trees we are responsible for replacing. So, I am pleased to hear that we can take this opportunity and follow through with some nice canopy trees, realizing again, we have different slopes on that part of the road. The slope is involved. The soil type makes a difference. There are lots of things that are involved, and I am happy that we have this potential move in the direction of getting out from under the wires and getting into areas where the trees could fully develop and develop their proper shapes and really work with the canopy, build the canopy that we need.

Mr. Bartley said if you are looking for an example for that kind of program, the City of Lakewood has a Front Yard Tree Program. They have the same issue where a lot of the times the right-of-ways aren't appropriate for planting trees, so instead they focus the time on the front yards. They plant them in lieu of in the tree lawn in the front yard where they have more room or probably better soil conditions.

Councilperson Synek said I was wondering if there are any resources available that are directed specifically to homeowners. They are most likely the ones that have to, they want to plant one tree in their yard. What do they plant? How do you coach them to put the right thing there to further those goals?

Mr. Bartley said we have the various brochures, and we put them up there in the presentation. We can make those available for residents. There are ones on how to select a tree basically for your property, and what to take into account for that. There is some general kind of stuff, but then whoever you are buying that tree from should be able to provide you some information if

you are buying it from a tree farm. If you are going to Home Depot or something, they might not have the exact same kind of information for that. There are plenty of opportunities to be able to get trees. We have a tree sale where a lot of these kinds of trees that we are hoping people will plant, native trees, and will adapt to the climate change, those are available to residents as well.

Councilperson Synek asked where would one go to get those?

Mr. Bartley said there's a link to them directly on our website. I believe that, and I will send that in a follow up.

Councilperson Synek said great, thank you.

Councilperson Veverka said if anybody is not on the list of Cuyahoga County Soil & Water, when you put the picture of the tree up on the screen, 2 days ago we got the newsletter from the County, and of course pictures on there is one of the slides. So, if anybody who is paying attention, I would suggest that you make that connection because they do have lots of programs and other things that are very helpful. Now I did a commercial for you guys.

Ms. Rybka said let me add too, our outreach strategy, every year the staff is speaking to folks at each of the cities we work with; and so if you have let's say an area where you would love to see people plant more trees, we can target, mail some of these brochures that we have showed you earlier, whether it's the benefits of trees, tree selection, proper care. So, let us know because we are happy to do that. That's part of the work effort that we have every year for your City.

Councilperson Veverka asked so we could probably get some of those brochures when we replant the area along Brookside Road for people to know how?

Several people said absolutely.

Councilperson Veverka said okay, very good.

I have one question that runs in a little different direction. I know that we had an area in town a few years back that was cleared, and it needed to be cleared because of the brown bat population. Is there any kind of balance to something like that? In other words, the EPA needs to protect the environment, but the trees have to be cut before a certain date related to the brown bat nesting? Again, that requires more clear cutting rather than selective cutting. Is anything in the works that there's a little balance there because it seems like we are butting heads, the trees on one side and the brown bat is on the other side.

Mr. Bartley said I think the timeline is there basically if you are past that date you have to do a bat study and really determine if they are present just because of the time of year and their life cycle. I don't think that should affect it if it's clear cutting versus more selective, unless people are just rushing because they want to get it done. We get a lot of those. When we are reviewing erosion sediment control plans and stormwater erosion prevention control plans, that's one of those times of year when we get a lot of those too, people trying to get them quick because they want to get it approved by the time they go and get that cutting done before they have to do the

study. So, I can see that line maybe makes it more, people trying to get in there and get it done, it leads to more clear cutting potentially; but it doesn't require more clear cutting.

Councilperson Veverka said okay, thank you.

Chairman Trakas said another question I had along those lines, I think what Councilperson Synek was talking about. So, the encouragement of the civilian population to try to plant trees in their yards. How have you found communities are able to encourage that? So, there's a limited amount of land that the City controls, and I think we have some ideas how we can increase the capacity there; but it really comes down to our business residents and our residents. So, you said Lakewood has a program. Are there other model programs that we could take a look at that we might be able to enhance and/or replicate that you think would be worthy along these lines because without getting the residents involved, I think it would be difficult to try to achieve these goals.

Mr. Bartley said the other programs that I am aware are linked like more to financial incentives to residents to do something like that. I believe it's the Street Tree Program, but possibly also on private property, the City of Strongsville does a cost share basically with the residents. I believe that's actually for the street trees potentially. It might also be front lawn trees. I think the resident pays for the tree, and the city plants it or something like that. There is some agreement or benefit where the city is providing either financial, a discount, or the service for that tree, I think planting. I think these are larger burlap sized trees.

Other programs that we have done related to watersheds. So, there's other opportunities to partner the Watershed organizations in your community, West Creek Conservancy and some of those. In the Rocky River and Euclid Creek, we have done, some have gotten grants to basically provide trees, not big burlap, but in containers or seedlings to residents in certain areas. We focus on stream corridors; so the residents living along stream corridors. There are other opportunities as well. I think a lot of it ends up being tied to financial incentives with the residents, or really trying to build that movement. To have almost a campaign, you have that message, whatever it is like we are doubling our tree canopy by whatever; and this is how you can do your part. I think they could really buy into that too, especially working with neighborhood groups. Like in Cleveland Heights, groups of neighbors, do a pollinator pathway they call it. They are trending towards pollinator gardens and native plants, and try to get these whole streets where they are talking to their neighbors and get them to do it. They get pretty good participation on the street. It's really having somebody dedicated and out there talking to the neighbors.

Mr. Hewitt said there are also some really good examples of target percentages for things in your regulatory code that you could look to for, I think we talked about the front lot coverage for trees. There are good targets that the American Planning Association can provide to make sure your code already is set up for success. Some of that also could be things like requiring a landscape plan as part of your development process, both for commercial developments, large scale residential developments; but also when you are redoing your streets or you are out working with ODOT or other transportation agencies, making sure that you are asking about trees at that point also because that's another good time to be able to have those conversations.

Chairman Trakas said very good, thank you. Is there anything else for our guests from the County Planning Commission or Cuyahoga Soil & Water?

Councilperson Veverka said thank you very much for coming.

Ms. Cerebiej said thank you for the invitation. We will follow up with the slide deck, and we will add that link that Jared posted and if there's anything else we think of during today's conversation, we will add that in the e-mail to the group as well.

Mayor Kurtz said Mary and team, thank you very much, and Jan and Jared, thank you for always being a great partner from Cuyahoga Soil Conservation. So, we look forward to a more robust discussion, future opportunities to support us and help us navigate through some of the opportunities.

Ms. Cerebiej said thank you Mayor.

Councilperson Kapusta said it was a pleasure to hear from people such as yourselves who truly have a passion for what you do, so thank you.

Mayor Kurtz said absolutely.

Ms. Cerebiej said we kept right on schedule, so thank you Jim for setting it up; and I hope everybody enjoys the rest of your day.

Chairman Trakas said thank you. The committee still has a little bit of work to do. You don't have to stick around, but you are welcome to. It's highly interesting stuff, I have to tell you.

So, we do have Resolution 2020-19 that is on the agenda, and you heard, I think one of the goals of today obviously Members of Council and I think the Mayor had some questions about functionality and is this needed. We do have the resolution that is on the agenda for today, and I was just wondering if you had specific questions about that. I had an amendment that I wanted to make if you agreed to it and wanted to see if you had any further discussion on that before we considered that on today's agenda.

Chairman Trakas said I was contemplating, it reads right now, it says that it demands the City to double its tree canopy between the years 2020 and 2030. I wanted to make a friendly amendment to substitute from the word double to increase, and then also substitute the words 2021 for 2020 because obviously it's no longer 2020. Would that be accepted as a friendly amendment?

Councilperson Veverka replied yes.

Chairman Trakas asked what's the pleasure of the committee on the legislation?

Councilperson Synek said that was a very interesting slide that our previous guests showed with the tree canopy as a percentage of total acreage or whatever in your community, and in terms of

a goal, would it be perhaps more worthy to have Independence aspire to be in the top 10 or the top 5 on that scale? That to me is measurable. I mean they track that sort of stuff, so maybe that's a metric we could hope to be on, that really gives us something tight to measure against. Doubling, what does that mean exactly? Who is going to measure that?

Chairman Trakas said sure.

Councilperson Synek said whatever that metric was that they were using to get us into the top tier of the communities in Cuyahoga County for tree coverage.

Mayor Kurtz said Mr. Chairman, keep in mind that some of the communities that were in the top tier were also had a great number of acres that were absorbed by either National Park or Metroparks. So, it's hard to compete with some of the larger communities, but there has to be some mechanism, I agree. There has to be some mechanism to chart your success. I am not sure what that mechanism is.

Chairman Trakas said the way the legislation is written, it says that we will put together a plan to put forward for future specifics, so it's a little bit more generic. I agree by the way with Councilperson Synek and Mayor Kurtz, it's a good idea to have specifics in there. Do you want to leave the resolution as it is, and then come up with those specifics as deliverables as we go through implementation? Or would you like to take a crack at getting more specific with it now? I could go either way, but maybe sometimes with more information we find that out. We aren't going to be Bentleyville. We are not going to do that, but there are some things we can do. What do you think?

Councilperson Synek said it doesn't seem like now, we really can't get specific right. It's a sort of thing to be figured out; so how do you word that in the context of this resolution and not be setting yourself off on the wrong foot? You don't want to say something that's completely unachievable at this stage of the game. More, but to be defined what more tree canopy cover is.

Mayor Kurtz said Mr. Chairman I support the concept. I am not sure how the measurable of it is. I agree with Councilperson Synek, tonight is not the way we are going to find a robust conclusion; but something that doesn't harness us, but gives us motivation.

Chairman Trakas asked do we want to put in the title there that we would seek to increase our tree canopy between the years 2021 and 2030 to be in the top 10% in Cuyahoga County for the purposes? That gives us some leeway, we won't be Number 1.

Councilperson Veverka said the top percentage would be the top 5, that would be worse than the other one.

One of the comments that they made was the fact that our tree canopy, we are in the middle, but it shrunk a little. So, I wonder if the target might be to maintain; so in other words, we don't lose ground, and with the target also being to potentially increase. If we simply were able to maintain the tree canopy, that means we didn't lose. If we are able to pick up a little, I mean that's

measurable because they do these studies periodically; and that gives you a pretty good idea if we maintain or made an increase.

Finance Director Blaze said let's think that through. If you take the entire land mass of the City of Independence, private ownership accounts for the vast majority of it; we stated earlier that the National Park has a good chunk of it. So, the portion of land on a percentage basis that the City of Independence owns and controls is probably a small fraction of the total land area. So, I guess my question is if the goal is to establish a measurable of how much we are going to increase the tree canopy, I am not so sure we can do that without the private property owners' participation. To me, that takes the initiative to a new level. It's one thing to say hey we are going to plant more trees on City owned property because we could control that; but I have less control over what happens on private property, so I throw that out as a question of how we would go about trying to achieve this goal of having a greater tree canopy on property that we don't own and control?

Chairman Trakas said that's a very fair and valid point. So, the resolution does try to give us time to develop strategies as to how to do that. We asked a question about that, and they said well some communities give an incentive, some do an educational program. I guess the goal would be from this legislation would be to have our own specific way of doing that, and we could always reset if we are 5 years into it, and we are not making any headway then maybe we try to do something different along those lines. There is no penalty. No one is going to jail if we don't do this; so that's obviously a nice part of it. I think you can have some measurable goals, and by creating citizen participation in this, I think we can get to where we want to be. I think there's some energy behind it, and the population would be interested in doing it, we just have to give people some forums and some ideas as to how they could do that. That's part of what this says is that we will be developing that during the course of this 9 year process.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said if we came up with some kind of program where if we can get the trees inexpensively, we can either sell them to our residents, not making any money on it, or have something in the monthly books, hey on this day in May the City is going to provide residents with trees for their yards to increase the tree canopy. You know some type of program for that. This way we are initiating it with giving away some trees to our residents, which may take it off.

Chairman Trakas said that's certainly one of the ways to do it. It's clearly a particularly successful one in several other communities as they mentioned.

Councilperson Veverka said one of the other items, obviously providing the tree is a plus; but we would have to have involvement in getting the trees planted properly. I relate to her story. We spent big money at the Methodist church in the back hiring a landscaper to put in these gorgeous arborvitae, and they began dying. Only when I started pulling them out of the ground, found they were wrapped in their metal cages. So, making sure that we provide some sort of assist when it comes to making appropriate holes; it sounds funny, but I remember Big Four Lumber down at the bottom of the hill, they always had a sign don't put a \$5 tree in a 5 cent hole. What it simply meant was making the hole large enough, making sure that you do all the things she suggested about spreading the root ball, getting the burlap off, taking the cages off and then

appropriately staking the tree and so on. That's part of the education that would need to go along with providing the tree, but I like the idea of providing the tree and getting it in an appropriate place and getting it off to a great start so we are not just buying trees that die.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked what if we try to involve Scott Maretka from the high school who runs the Land Lab and the Biology Society; and I am sure he's very versed in this subject. Maybe we can turn it into a City/school project where him and the Biology Society can plant these trees for our residents. This way it gets the schools involved.

Councilperson Kapusta said to add on to what Chris is saying, tell me about this phantom Tree Commission.

Chairman Trakas said we have a Tree Commission on the books, and I don't know that it has met in some years.

Councilperson Kapusta said at least 20 if not more. I remember from when I started working with the City in 2000, never heard anything about it.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said it's the first I ever heard of it.

Chairman Trakas said it was created in 1993 I think, and it was part of when we made the application for the Tree City USA product.

Councilperson Kapusta said because I think that could be a good vehicle to bring about some of the things and the collaboration that Chris mentioned and others have mentioned too. We know that we have jewels in town such as Alan Klonowski, and I am sure there are others who have not only a knowledge base for this, but an interest, a passion. Maybe that's one of the things that we can spearhead this with. I don't know enough about it to know why it didn't make a go or whatever happened to it, but the concept to me sounds good, getting people together who have an interest and a common interest and then trying to forge forward, not only with the resident base, but also with the City at large.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said the school has that City garden next to the high school. It can all be put together or joined together.

Chairman Trakas said I think both of those are excellent suggestions, and I think they are very workable. So, how do you get to these goals over the course of a 10 year period? Those are the ways you get to them, I think those are terrific ideas. Again, we have some time to put together the details behind it, and perhaps this can be a catalyst to have that discussion and to create some energy and enthusiasm, both with our residents, within the school district, our business community and with City government all collaborating towards that goal.

Councilperson Kapusta said another thing that I think is important to this is to maintain visibility. If we believe that this is a concept that we value and want to go forward with, and I certainly do; that I think we have to have visibility, whether those vehicles are a section on our website, something in our newsletter, but not just a one-time hit thing. It's repeated, and there are

certainly enough topics. I mean just today I was jotting a few things down here, and oh my gosh, the list is endless of things that were interesting to me, and I would think to other residents too. We would love to have more education about.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said what about Jim if a resident wants to donate, I don't want to say donate, but support a tree. Say the City wants to plant a tree on City property, a resident would say hey I can pay for it. You guys can plant it here, and then we put like a little plaque by the tree that says this tree was donated by this family. I know there's a term for it, but it is just slipping my mind right now.

Chairman Trakas said that's a beautiful idea, and I think that is something what they eluded to earlier that there is a Memorial Program where you can plant a tree in memory of somebody. I remember when I was a little boy, my dad grew up on West 17th Street, and there was a tree in front of the house; and it was dedicated to a soldier who had lost his life in the first World War. So, we knew that guy's name and talked about him and where he was in France when he was killed; and that tree was dedicated to him. There were plaques all over it. So, with Cleveland being the forest city, they had a whole program dedicated to trees in the 1920's and 1930's, and the school kids were catalysts for the program. So, I think all of these, we can replicate some of the things that have been successful in the past, and having that Memorial Program and maybe even having little plaques or something; I think that would be a terrific idea.

The Plain Dealer did a story about that maybe 8 or 10 years ago about some of the plaques that are still out there from the World War I memorials.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said well it just brings back an idea like, I remember back when they built Progressive Field, and the arena. My uncle had bought bricks that they put in the concourse with our names on it. They were like \$50 a brick. We got Paul Walchanowicz, Chris Walchanowicz, Go Cavs on them, and that's a brick that thousands of people walk on when they are at an event. We are talking trees. It's a life.

Chairman Trakas said beautiful, absolutely. Mayor, do those things sound interesting to you?

Mayor Kurtz said they are all very interesting and intriguing. I am trying to wrap my arms around showing progress, something that is measurable. We have a lot of different projects going on. As many of you know, we are embarking on the landscape portion of the street projects, and we are sending letters out as we speak to residents asking them about tree replacements and actually planting on their property rather than just trying to segment it to just the tree lawn area which we all know what happens when we do that. So, we will see what kind of feedback we get and participation. Our goal is to plant as many trees as reasonable. We have requests for zero to 20, and we are going to find some reasonable happy medium, common ground because we are not in the tree business; but we are also going to try to fix those properties that we modified to build the road and our sewer program.

I am just trying to get my arms around how we show progress. The concept is great. It's trying to define and show progress and making sure that the financial challenge is manageable, reasonable. If someone comes up with a bullseye, I am ready for it.

Councilperson Veverka said I want to piggyback on Kathleen's idea. Within the last 2 weeks I know that I have had a discussion with Al Klonowski, and Al has indicated that he has a willingness to, on behalf of the City, visit the individual houses and assist with working with location for planting the tree on the property and basically help in what might be appropriate too. So, we have that person right in town, and he has expressed that willingness. So, we can latch onto that.

Mayor Kurtz said we can take that under advisement. Thank you.

Chairman Trakas asked do we want to put this on the March agenda so we can kick off some of these discussions in a more formal manner?

Councilperson Veverka said I would move to do that.

Mayor Kurtz said well if it's on the agenda, you are going to have the debate, if you can have something that you can conclude or we can build consensus off of, I would say it's time to move the legislation. If you are just looking for a vote, that would be the other option to move the legislation. I am not sure that we have defined those measurable.

Chairman Trakas said I think Mayor what the legislation calls for is that we put together a process to do that, anticipating that it would be more than just a few of us involved. We would engage others and have some of the discussions like we have had now and then come up with a plan that didn't necessarily have to be in legislation; but would be something that was realistic and incorporated many of the ideas and concepts discussed today, as well understanding that if there are costs associated with these, both to residents and to the community. So, it doesn't call that it has to be something specific, it's just that we would start that planning process, and perhaps by passing this, it would kick that off and put together a committee process where we can consistently be looking at that.

Councilperson Synek asked what would it take to empanel the Tree Commission? Apparently the Commission exists, but there are no members. Who appoints the members? How do you get that going?

Mayor Kurtz said I will resurrect that, and we will have that for the Council meeting if that helps, or before then.

Councilperson Synek said I was talking about giving a shout out to Superintendent Ben Hegedish, one of his favorite lines that has always stuck with me through the years is "the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago to plant a tree is today."

Chairman Trakas said wise man that Ben. There is a motion on the floor to move Resolution 2020-19 to the main body, any further discussion? Okay, will the Clerk please call the roll?

Councilperson Synek said personally I haven't read that resolution in quite some time. I can't remember what it says to tell you the truth. That's on me, but I am happy to move it forward;

but I reserve the right to critique it a little more because I hadn't read it before this meeting, and it's been a while.

Chairman Trakas said and anything can change in the meantime. So, it's understandable.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked Debi are you able to put that resolution in everybody's packet for Friday so we can all review it?

The Clerk said it is already on the website under today's meeting agenda.

Chairman Trakas said I will send it out to everybody as a refresher.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said okay, great.

A motion was made by Councilperson Veverka, seconded by Councilperson Synek, to have Resolution 2020-19 be included on the March 9th Regular Council agenda. Voice Vote: 3 yes/0 no; motion carried.

Chairman Trakas asked are there further matters to come before the committee at this time? There were none. The Chairman hearing none, we will ask for a motion to adjourn, and I want to thank everybody for their really excellent ideas and participation; and we will have a lot more of these going forward.

Moved by Councilperson Synek, seconded by Councilperson Veverka, to adjourn the Utilities Committee meeting of February 25, 2021. Voice Vote: 3 yes/0 no; motion carried.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you Members of Council. Nice committee meeting Jim, thank you.

Chairman Trakas said thanks Mayor. Thanks for everything.

There being no further business, the Utilities Committee meeting was adjourned at 4:23 p.m.

