

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE
COUNCIL WORKSHOP MINUTES
MARCH 14, 2023, AT 3:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CAUCUS ROOM & VIA ZOOM**

Vice Mayor Dave Grendel called the Council Workshop to order at 3:07 p.m. Present were Council Members John DiGeronimo, Tom Narduzzi, Anthony Togliatti, Jim Trakas, Dale Veverka, and Chris Walchanowicz. Also in attendance were Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz, Finance Director Vern Blaze, Economic Development Director Jessica Hyser, City Planner Annie Lynch, Building Official Michael Gero, Communication Director Alla Lora, Executive Assistant Darlynn Velotta, and Deputy Clerk of Council Amanda Sharrer.

Vice Mayor Grendel said welcome everyone to the Council Workshop. It will be the first of many that we will have ongoing dialogue; and it's the strategic planning session which was scheduled back in January, and unfortunately there was a death in our family, so it was postponed until today.

I guess without further ado, I know that Vern, some of this was your idea and everything if you wanted to give us some guidance as to how we get the dialogue and the conversation started.

Finance Director Blaze said sure, thank you Vice Mayor. The original intent was to meet in person in January, and I had offered to lead the strategic planning session; but those plans fell by the wayside. So, in order to not let the process just stop until we could all meet again in person, the Mayor decided to solicit some of the initial feedback, and input and base level thoughts and ideas that go into a strategic plan electronically; and thank you to all of you here sitting at the table who did do that and participated in that. Then that very large document that you have in front of you, thank Alla and Dar especially that used their skills in putting all that in a spreadsheet and trying to quantify nine elected officials' thoughts and ideas, priorities, goals and everything that was asked for. So, that is that spreadsheet which I believe that everybody had gotten already prior to today; and so, I think the Mayor is just here to pick it up and say okay Council you did your job and Step 1 you provided your input. Step 2, my office quantified it and kind of summarized it and put it in a format that is understandable, and now Step 3 is here we are to take that first step of just let's maybe review on a very high level just some of the cursory findings from what was all submitted. Then hopefully by 4:30 p.m., we walk away from here saying our next step is a, b, c. We are going to meet this date or something so that we walk away from here kind of collectively knowing where we want to go from here.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you Vern, and I think to move on. Actually, we made them in 2023/2024 because it will bleed into 2024, 2025, 2026, nothing is left in one year or one challenge or year. Some of the information that you provided, and we inputted stresses that these are long-term objectives. These aren't things that are going to be done in a year; but to focus on a starting point, I will support that the City is a striving community. It's fiscally responsible, supports the Economic Department and is business friendly. It is safe and provides excellent services and high quality of life and amenities.

I think it's fair to say that's probably the over-arching goals from everybody at this table as leaders of this community, and we have tabulated and put this information together; and we tried to identify the critical information. We also did not rank anything, and we tried to incorporate as many of your thoughts as possible into this summary. So, because there is no right or wrong answer, it's a matter of seeing where there's a consensus, where there are some outlying information, where there is additional information that is needed and go from there.

We went through the SWOT analysis and worked through that to determine our strengths, our location, our income tax base, the City services, the amenities that we have available to us, the proximity to the National Park.

The weakness is we have limited housing types. There is a lot of pedestrian non-vehicle infrastructure. There's the ability to attract entrepreneurs due to high rent. The limited land is at a very high cost, and the allocated Service garage were some of the weaknesses.

We also had undeveloped downtown, the aging housing stock, the increased number of rental properties, aging commercial buildings and infrastructure projects that have not been completed, just to name a few of the challenges.

In terms of opportunities, access to the Cuyahoga river and National Park, the uncut diamond, updating the street design standards, increasing the number of rental properties, aging commercial buildings and partnering with RTA to improve services.

Also, the opportunities are attracting new residents. We closed on the Concordia property last week so that's now part of our responsibility. The new or remodeled Police station, a satellite station, a public safety facility, continue upgrade to the parks and recreation. We have an uncut diamond over the hill in terms of the Hemlock property and redeveloping or repurposing some of our business districts.

Opportunities would be downtown, an opportunity to redevelop downtown. Our partnerships play an important role. Helping residents with their homes, making the City a destination, continued upgrades to the parks and recreation and redeveloping business districts.

Of course, working with the schools to create a public service academy. We have a meeting scheduled for the near future, I think next week to talk to, to intertwine our business community with our teachers, to hopefully build some type of foundation for internships or the opportunity to move forward.

Some of the threats are aging housing inventory, tax revenue, the work model that we have been trying to identify for the last couple of years, a looming recession, that is a potential, the regional crime issue and the lack of (inaudible) prioritization and alignment.

Threats are increase in operational spending, competition from surrounding communities for economic development projects.

So, in terms of priorities, we have agreed that maintaining funding and bidding future infrastructure projects is a high priority, considering including in the discussion the construction emergency exit ramp. We have submitted to ODOT, actually we submitted to the legislature, Jim you understand the procedures. We have to go through the budget process to incorporate into the next budget and see if we can turn that around. We have been denied three times for various reasons. In our latest conversation with our representative, they are willing to champion the cause and provide an opportunity that hopefully would result in the emergency exit ramp being built onto Selig, starting on Selig to I-77 which then creates a number of different dynamics for us. So, we are working through that as a priority.

The Service garage, most of Council and the Finance Director have indicated that we should explore opportunities to renovate or build new, add on to or define the Service garage and its' capacity.

You will recall that we picked up the ODOT property, I look at this as a premier challenge. One is put ourselves in the position to be able to build and then designing and then building. So, a three year, if we go with a new construction with an infrastructure project, my goal would be make it a three year deal. So, right now we are going to use the ODOT property as our backstop. As a matter of fact, we were loading salt out of the salt teepee, so we are using it for that purpose entirely.

Economic Development, we focused on new program incentives, retaining and attracting new businesses, opportunities, most of which you have already participated in terms of accepting some of these incentives. There are a number of new opportunities on the horizon that will need Council interaction and discussion. The Cloverleaf, and downtown areas also have to be part of that discussion.

In addition, let's see, lack of housing options for our City is still a weakness. The people rejected downtown housing a couple of years ago, probably a decade ago now; but there is still a need for keeping our residents in the City, along with exploring opportunities to put our toe in the water and see if we can still maintain the integrity of a small town community, along with trying to come up with new opportunities to keep our residents in Independence.

Police station, you have heard the Chief talk about it at the Safety Committee, looking at the deficiencies. This building is 40 years old and remodeling. Looking at a new satellite station, Police station, or a combination of the above is something we are going vet, search out, and then see if we can pick out the best solution from an infrastructure standpoint facility. More boots on the ground was also identified as a priority with cameras around the City was also mentioned.

The library center, this has been an issue, it's in its' incubation phase. It involves the County library and their interest to build a new facility. As part of that, similar to what we did with the original library, we contribute the land, they build the structure. There have been several suggestions is it downtown, Route 21, Selig and onto the existing building. So, again, a lot of opportunity, but eventually this group is going to have to make those decisions.

Next steps, the next step is really about everyone weighing in. You have had a chance to weigh in on a preliminary basis, and we have outlined; and you have had enough information to be able to synthesize it yourself and hopefully we are in a position now to really hit hard. We have identified 100 issues, how do we fracture those down to something that is more manageable and eventually get down to something that we can actually focus on and put some investment in planning and then eventually answer some of the questions that were raised during the overarching analysis.

So, that's really what we are trying to do. As a group we need to prioritize. With looking at the public buildings and lands portion of infrastructure, we identified the Service garage which was built in 1976 in the worst condition.

Since Chief Butler's been around, he's now recognizing some of the deficiencies in the existing facility, the way it's designed or built 40 years ago; and we need to now, for those two infrastructure projects, define, get some information together and then this group could decide if we want to, or help me define help steer this thing as best I can with respect to the Chief, Service Director, the people who are responsible for these facilities. In terms of the Police Department or Service Department, I know that those two are very active trying to get information in terms of their facilities, but ultimately it's a funding issue, it's a priority issue, it's a long-term strategy.

So, clearly there is a consensus that the majority wants to look at these issues, but a full scope would be renovation? New? In terms of the Police Department, would you do it in combination with a satellite safety force facility with Fire? Would you build it on Rockside Road or on Brecksville Road? Would you use the property on the campus? Would you stay with the existing campus, existing facility knowing that most new departments, everything is housed, locked up. You wouldn't have like we have the cars sitting outside. It would be a new configuration. Everything is more protected, more secure; and so that's one of the challenges of trying to renovate from the existing footprint; but if after we do more in-depth analysis, after I get direction from this group, then we can assess that, do the assessment, and then determine what is best, similar to what they did 40 years ago, a little over 40 years ago for this building. Similar to what we did for the new Fire station. Similar for what we did for the Engineering building. We grew into some of these elements. Before we had outside consultants, and now we have our own team of people that are giving us a better responsive time.

So, there are a number of different infrastructure projects that you identified. We have put together, and now we just have to have more discussion and give us some direction on this. I need that from the people at this table. So, that's how we kick this off because as Vern said, we are not going to wave our magic wand and pretend to get it all done in an hour and a half. I mean it could take multiple hours and a half to do something like that, but we have to start somewhere. So, I appreciate the fact that you took the time to identify issues from your perspective, and we took that information and did the best we could to synthesize it and now delivered it back so you could see what your colleagues were thinking. Everything is here, and if anything was not here that you presented, you tell us because we tried to be very descriptive in terms of your input because it's not my decision, it's not each one of you individually, it's collective what we could come up with.

So, that's where we are at, and the goal now would be to move forward in an organized fashion so that we can identify some of these, lock down some overall strategy and timetable and financing so we can go forward on it.

In terms of, and that's the infrastructure defined by building infrastructure. We have road infrastructure. We have utility infrastructure, and then we have our amenities in terms of the proximity to the National Park, some of our land issues, a river, the railroad, some of the things that are taking place that you may be aware of, we don't have enough information yet. We are always trying to collect information, but there are a lot of opportunities out there. That's just from this component of infrastructure.

Now if we move beyond infrastructure, and we start talking about economic development, now you are taking and talking about a whole different dynamic because we need to have the tools and response time to be able to not only attract, maintain, but retain some of these businesses that are going through their metamorphosis in terms of how they are going to go to business in 2023, 2024 and beyond, shrinking footprints, different amenities that they need for their buildings, the age of some of their facilities; but they are definitely, it's robust to the extent that they are engaged. They want to know how the community is going to react to some of their questions; and I think our Economic Development team is trying to do the best they can to be ahead of the curve in terms of some of their requests, ideas, or suggestions. So, that's a whole different discussion because it impacts every one of us because right now we have monitored for the past three years more closely than in the past our income tax. We are stable, but who knows what the impact of this change in the law of 2022 and now 2023. So far this year we are stable, but we can't rest or sit back because everything is changing.

So, Vern, do you want to add anything else?

Finance Director Blaze did not want to add anything else.

Councilperson Veverka said let me make one quick comment. You say that the income is stable, but we are also dealing with inflation that is going goofy. So, in other words, that to me is kind of a net loss. So, I think we have to kind of bridle in some of the expectations. Whereas before, we could anticipate, if we needed money, we could buy it at 3%, or borrow it at 3% or less; and now we are in a position where it's dramatically increased, which means it would be difficult to repay if we are going to borrow for any kind of a big project. Then you combine that with the fact that based on what I have seen from Vern's calculations, we are not exactly in the cash position that we were last year, let alone years before. Is that a fair assessment Vern?

Finance Director Blaze said that's too open-ended to narrow down. I did provide the 2022 summary there in a hard copy. If anybody wants it electronically, I can get it to you. I think it is a fair statement to say that the income tax has been in a very kind of narrow range between \$33,000,000 and \$35,000,000 in the last five years; but yes operating expenses have been going up. So, at some point something has got to give. The revenue either has to kick up, or you are going to have to bend that curve of your operating expenses. Otherwise, at some point you are going to need to.

Councilperson Veverka said well because I know at my house, one of the very first things when I notice that there is a difference in either the amount of income or the buying power of my income, I know one of the first things that I do is to kind of pull in and act conservatively with my spending. So, based on my own personal situation, that's my first reaction is okay, how do we manage to do as many of the things we can do and pick out the things that are most critical and work at making them as best as they can be.

The other piece that kind of goes along with it, if we roll the clock back 40 years, the population of Independence was maybe 7,000 instead of 7,500. So, we have had an increase of maybe only less than 8% in the population; but over those years, we have done a variety of things. You talk about the new Fire station. That satisfied two needs at that time; one was the new Fire station, and the other one was the Building and Engineering Departments' reuse of that facility.

The other questions then become, what is realistic now? When the library was built as part of the Civic Center, did we get money from the County for that?

Mayor Kurtz asked the facility itself? They are responsible for maintaining, they have to maintain everything in that building.

Councilperson Veverka replied correct, but did they pay for part of it?

Mayor Kurtz said they paid for all the external mechanisms. We paid for the structure. It was part of our bond issue.

Councilperson Veverka said so they didn't really contribute to the actual cost.

Mayor Kurtz said for clarification, the new formula is that if you supply the land, they will supply the construction. So, \$10,000,000 in this case I believe.

Councilperson Veverka said well the question that goes along with that is the location. Do we want to risk trying to move a library and put it in a position that puts it closer to where our kids are? Or is it a reasonable distance now to go across the athletic field a long distance for somebody that might have bad thoughts to be able to get more easily to our schools? So, I kind of wonder if the thoughts about having a building across the street, making it closer to our schools, might not be a good idea. So, if something like that were to be developed, does it make more sense to move it into the center of town? If they are providing the money, we do have the property there. It could be a draw to the center of town. It could be something that could be very helpful in collecting some additional people in the center of town. It could be kind of a focus.

Vice Mayor Grendel said just to build on that, I think the same thing. It could be, we talked back, I think Anthony when you were Mayor, to have an amphitheater back there for programming. If we had a library there that might attract speakers. It might attract programs and that to bring people into the center. Or it might be something that could be built upon. Maybe a restaurant would come there. Maybe we would have a program where you would have weekly speakers. It could be from the political world, it could be from the literary world. It could be from a number

of things, but that will attract people to come downtown. We have been looking at different ends. The big project we looked at maybe excavating and having their headquarters or whatever. We are trying to look at big, but maybe as something as simple as that where you have, and of course libraries now are not like they were when this was built. I mean books aren't as important as programs are. I know that my grandkids go to the one in Northfield quite often for the various programs that they have, and it's well-attended by young families. That could be, again, are they competing with what we have at the Civic Center and the programs that we have too. By having a library there, maybe that will help our development of downtown, at least part of downtown, and maybe would lead to other development there and not a splashy type of thing, but it would still be enough to bring families down there. Again, maybe a playground or something that would bring activity to the downtown area. It might be all hogwash.

Mayor Kurtz said well actually Vice Mayor and Dale, at least you are bringing up something for discussion because there is no, nothing is set in stone. It's an opportunity. What I would like to do is to keep trying to stay back up here at a higher level so that we can define some of these, and prioritize if possible; and then we can drill down and have a discussion purely on that issue. That seems to be one issue. So, boom we can put our arms around that issue, and then get information, build upon it, get information to the point where we can make a decision. Now the only other asterisk for that is if there is another entity that is going to participate. So, all we have been exposed to is the over-arching idea that they proposed with certain parameters. So, I think that identifying it as an issue, it needs to be discussed more, absolutely. That is one to check off. Let's put it up there for further discussion.

Vice Mayor Grendel said that also leads to the fact that if they do go building new, that would free up the room there at the Civic Center to expand there for City programs too. You are helping one situation. You are expanding your Civic Center without actually having to add on or big expenses there, and you are planning a facility for your library. You are hopefully bringing some economic development to your downtown area, and all the programs are positive for the community and everything too.

Mayor Kurtz said I think location is one of the open boxes on that facility. The only parameter that we have to remember is that it has to be on property that we own. If it's property we own, then it's something that they can then sink their teeth in, design, develop with the amenities that they need for the future. So, I would say, boom, that one is done.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said they could have a bigger footprint.

Mayor Kurtz said it could be. There's nothing that references that.

Councilperson Narduzzi said we are giving them the land. To me, that's valued land.

Several people began speaking at once.

Councilperson Trakas said I think you can do the same thing with a multi-story facility. Our business community, you might be able to get our business community to say hey I am going to spend my lunch hour there and just kind of hang out.

Mayor Kurtz said that's one infrastructure project that we have identified, and it's not today because, it's today in terms of our planning for the departments in terms of our strategic planning for the Community Services, Rec Department because of the impact. In terms of the library there, the outside entity, and they have asked us to identify a location; and so that's one of the over-arching goals that we have to put together. So, that would be one.

What other areas?

Councilperson Trakas said I like the Police station. So, a couple of things about that. First of all, I think you kind of have a danger there now because it has been designed for a quarter of the amount of Police Officers we have.

Finance Director Blaze said I wouldn't say that.

Councilperson Trakas said 40 years ago we had 25 people on the force.

Finance Director Blaze said so now we have.

Councilperson Trakas said we doubled, I am sorry. We didn't think it was going to grow the way it has. We also have a lot different of a setup. So, with technology, we have cameras in the various areas. Who's watching that? What are they watching? Do they watch it? I don't know. I would like to think we do, but I am thinking we don't do it. I think we do it retroactively because I didn't see a lot of that over there, but I think that's an important part of policing today.

I also think that the way it is designed, it's so kind of disjointed. So, it's like any type of a business that you work in and you talk about workflow. The workflow of that building because we have just kind of thrown this here and thrown this there, and there's space here. It gets really difficult to maximize our efficiency in the building; and I think there's a safety threat for the Police Officers. So, if you were to design a building for the Police Department, you wouldn't have the thing that we have now. So, I think it's important that we do at least get a committee or an internal committee or whatever it be, kind of looking at the various. First of all, what are our needs, and what's the flow? What's the workflow? So, when you come in here, you have a workflow. Economic Development over there. The Mayor's office is over here. You don't have that at the Police Station. You have to go here for this, and here for that. It's kind of cramped. I don't know that it's the best workflow. I think it's difficult, and as we are talking about, I look at when I was Ohio State they built the Woody Hayes Center; and boy did that attract the athletes to come to Ohio State. Now it's 30 years old, and they have to do something differently, but I look at the same thing as our Police Department. We are in a competitive situation, and if you are bringing in new officer potentials and they go through there. They are like gosh this is really disjointed, and where is my locker going to be?

I just think we should be thinking about the future that we are going to have a fairly large Police force. I would build it bigger than what it is in terms of where we currently have; but also the fact the workflow is just so ancient. I just don't think it works for modern Police Departments. I think you have to look at flow first. What are your needs? What are the operational needs 25 years in the future? How do you take advantage of technology? How do you utilize that technology?

Certainly, the range down to one firing slot there is not acceptable, and it's an older range; and so you have to work on that. How does that play into the whole thing? I think that's important to at least know what we want, and then we can kind of decide where you want it, and do you have multiple locations. Those are all kind of futuristic type things, and I think you kind of have to look at those slow first. What makes an efficient operation? So, what you were talking about Mayor was you would want to have something enclosed. Okay, well that takes space, if you want to enclose something like that. If you need to enclose it. We might have to enclose it, but let's get all that stuff squared away in terms of how much space do you need. My feeling is this is my old inventory control mind working when I worked for George Chase. If something lands on the dock, it has to be a raw material that you can store it, then you can make it, and then you can ship it. You just have one big workflow. So, if I arrive at the dock door here with a prisoner, what would I want to do? I would want to book the prisoner. I would want to have an interrogation room. I would want to have all these things, and then put the prisoner in jail. So, it's one workflow. We don't have that today. So, I think the first thing to do in my opinion would be, let's get a workflow that makes sense. How many square feet do you need for that? I would want to look at renovating the space. Maybe we could use this old space for temporarily something; but at least let's know what we need because I really do think with respect to technology and all the technology we have in the vehicles; it's not designed for that. I am concerned that we would be missing out if we didn't take a look at that type of thing.

First of all, let's look at the flow first, and then we could start getting more specific to what we would want to do; but I think we have to know what we need to do.

Councilperson Veverka said, and the additional part that goes with that, is are there some spaces that are not utilized? We have the dispatch area that is not utilized, and we have some other areas there that are not best utilized. So, I think that goes along with examining what potential space we have. What potential needs we have, and then a combination of those two will determine what course of action is best. We truly have to have a very clear idea of what you have available, and what your needs are. In the Civic Center we are taking the kitchen. We are utilizing the same space. We are having people come in, if we approve the piece of legislation tonight; but approve having somebody come in to show us what works so that it's a more effective kitchen. I see that as being the same potential for the Police Department. At least it's a starting point.

Vice Mayor Grendel said Brecksville that's a new Police station with a dispatch center combined.

Mayor Kurtz said they built theirs across the street.

Vice Mayor Grendel said so it would be nice to just analyze because now it's been in operation for a few years. You can even pick their brain, and say hey if you had to do it all over again, what are the mistakes made. You don't have to reinvent the wheel; we can just see from theirs even though we don't have a dispatch center here. At least we can see from their operational standpoint what's good, what's bad, and whether we can do it here. If we can do it by remodeling, what the cost is, and what's the cost of a new building. So, we can analyze. I think Council would need to see how much it's going to cost. Are we going to be penny wise and pound foolish, thinking we are going to save a few dollars now; but 10 years from now, we really haven't accomplished anything.

I am sure there are probably other communities that built a new Police station. Let's see what they did instead of going and trying to do something and pick their brains and say hey this is what they did that was good, and this is something they said that they made a mistake on and build upon that and improve it for our own model and give ourselves options too.

Councilperson Trakas said so Westerville had a 10 year old facility. I have been to that one, and I was outside of Westerville. They have a Mayor's Court.

Several people began speaking at once.

Mayor Kurtz said it's funny because they built it, and they did it from an architectural and aesthetic standpoint. So, now, and I don't think flow and logistics were high priority back then.

Councilperson Narduzzi said they didn't have it where they came from.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said it was functional, and then things changed, technology you mentioned; but the Chief has been doing some homework. There's Westlake, and there's a few others that he has toured. He has been part of that process; so flow, technology, all of the logistics, absolutely. I would say good. We will put that on a priority list. It's a high priority.

Councilperson Veverka asked and what other priority we have as far as jail? Are we bringing people in for very short term? Does it make sense for us to have to maintain, have jailers and extensive things, or are we just a quick holding area for potentially a better situation? If that space might be wasted where it could be better used for other Police activity and not be looking at long-term storage of criminals?

Mayor Kurtz said clearly, one of the issues was being articulated was renovation. That's one of them. Location would be another, and then defining the needs today in terms of what others have done. That a second way of looking at it, and then location is going to be another priority. So, I think we put that back up there. Renovation is a priority. Is that fair?

Councilperson Veverka said and the good news is there is space adjacent to the existing facility. It's not like the Fire Department is stuck up against the creek. It is in a position where there could be some additional space if it's needed.

Mayor Kurtz said so the priority becomes we are not building for today, we are building for 10, 20 years from now. We are trying to anticipate where that target is going to be. What technology is going to change. The Police service, how is that going to change over the next 5, 10, 20 years? So, a lot of those things have to be (inaudible) as best we can into defining the fact that we made this a priority. So, that's good. What else?

Vice Mayor Grendel said I was thinking, we talked about a satellite I think briefly. Of course, Seven Hills has been trying to jumpstart on their development on their site for years now and everything. We have the northwest quadrant. How is that going to look years from now, 10, 20, 30 years? Is that going to get built out? If it is, do we have, should there be something jointly with Seven Hills to handle, especially I am talking more like Fire, ambulance service and that to have quicker access to that area.

I think wasn't it talked about one time with Seven Hills about a joint facility?

Mayor Kurtz said a safety forces satellite one time on Rockside Road.

Vice Mayor Grendel said when you look at a crystal ball, when you look at the next 5, 10 years, but looking 30 years from now, if that's developed out there, the northwest quadrant has a number of buildings there and that, do we need to think, and if Seven Hills ends up developing their section too, does that make sense to go jointly with another community and have at least something to handle things. I am looking more or less at the ambulance, Fire, but it could be a satellite with the Police Department down there too.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Vice Mayor Grendel said that's an opportunity too.

Mayor Kurtz said that opens up a whole different thing. In all fairness, that discussion was had, is had and will be had with Seven Hills because with mutual aid today, whether it's an Independence ambulance or Valley View or Seven Hills; they are all trained appropriately. I think they have a part-time Fire Department.

Finance Director Blaze said I think they have both.

Mayor Kurtz said a hybrid they have.

Councilperson Trakas said to your point just now Mayor, Representative Patton has House Bill 23 in the Senate right now. He threw in a little interchange for Strongsville which he represents. Senator Kunze has, she's from the Columbus area, she has the bill now; but if we wanted to put

this into the bill, I think Representative Patton would be willing to take a look at us, and Senator Cirino is on the committee. So, he is looking at this right now.

Mayor Kurtz said we sent a packet to Senator Cirino and to Tom Patton. It came from the transportation budget and overall budget, but we have put packets together. Don has put a wonderful packet together for both of those gentlemen that supports the initiative that we have been rejected. So, with your help, that would be great. That's some of the criteria, if we had the emergency ramp, then we don't need something on Rockside.

Finance Director Blaze said, and there's another opinion to that too because if we built that, it's a cheaper option than building down on Rockside; but with the amount of square footage of office space we have and the 10 or 13 or 15 hotels we have, with the retail we have, with the interstates we have, then that future potential growth, my personal opinion is that area in town deserves its own station. That is still trying to come from the center of town down to that part of town, all day and all night, even if you have another access off of I-77, is inferior to having a facility there.

Mayor Kurtz said with respect to Fire, absolutely because Fire stays in the house. Police are like ants, they are all over. They shouldn't be in the house. So, it's a living dynamic, that whole process. Absolutely, I think, I cringe a little bit every time those guys go flying through the center of town. It's just one of those things you pray as they go by.

So, to suggest that it's a priority, I think there is a consensus that the Police is a priority, and so all the logistics and all this discussion will help us as we frame it up to continue to evaluate what is best, both economically and feasibly. What's best in terms of a long-term strategy? What's best for men and women in our department to keep them at their optimum level of service. What's next?

Councilperson Narduzzi asked can we stay on safety for one second? We talked about infrastructure. We talked about the blue lights, and the Chief said we don't have the infrastructure past Selig Road going south; so we can't go to Hillside. We can't go to Pleasant Valley because we don't have the fiber optics underground. So, it's something to consider. Step 1 is getting that infrastructure in there to plan for Step 2 which would be putting up the cameras. The cameras are very successful. Strongsville has them now. They love them. Beachwood has them, and they work.

Finance Director Blaze said not just Flocks, cameras.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said then that lends itself into do we try to go down Brecksville Road or do we do our trail system under the high tension line? All of a sudden it creates a different opportunity, two different areas to be able to get the infrastructure and the fiber in this case into locations that we don't have it today.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked do we have it on Pleasant Valley or no?

Mayor Kurtz said I thought we had Pleasant Valley.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Finance Director Blaze said I thought Jim Gibbs was here earlier, and I don't know if he left the building.

Councilperson Trakas said we are certainly on Pleasant Valley and Brecksville down to Rockside and Rockside.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said there are opportunities, but then again point well taken.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked when are they redoing 21?

Mayor Kurtz said our portion is scheduled for 2026 I believe. We have about three miles, and Brecksville has about three miles. I think it's 2025 and 2026 I believe. I think those are just doing a grind and overlay.

Councilperson Trakas said I think this is the future, and this is where it's going to be. You talk about what is an advantage to the community, you have that community-wide down Brecksville Road.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I can't believe that stuff can't be wireless too. I am sure it can be.

Mayor Kurtz said you can do dish point to point. That is how First Energy, you look at our tower.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said that's how they transmit their information. So, the point is well taken. Something underground or even dish type technology to deal with infrastructure. It's all good stuff.

What else? What's next?

Councilperson Veverka said can I digress just for a half a second, just related to the comments related to Rockside Road. Being on Safety Committee, I think we have to make sure that everybody is aware that most communities would kill for our quick response, whether it's the ambulance, the Fire Department, the Police Officers. I mean we have extraordinary response times that I know that many communities would be envious of. So, now keeping that in mind, are we trying to fine-tune something that already is pretty dang at the top of the pile?

Mayor Kurtz said it's evolving every day.

Councilperson Veverka said understood.

Mayor Kurtz said Council has been very fair and good in investing in a lot of these tools and manpower. That affects the budget, but no one here says safety and hiring more Police Officers and making sure that we have a full complement, and then training them properly to be able to identify issues. We got in the weeds, and it's not for today, but further conversation in terms of safety and all the different amenities.

Councilperson Trakas said you just brought up training, and I still think we should have some type of, I have been to Cleveland's training facility, and they have some pretty slick operational opportunities. It's actually a real city structure where hey is this a kid with a plastic gun, or is this a shooter? So, we don't really have any of those types of capabilities.

Mayor Kurtz said we send our people out.

Councilperson Trakas said that's an urban setting, it's not the same type of thing.

Mayor Kurtz said the Chief is very aggressive in terms of, and to the credit of all of our people, they are very willing and wanting to learn; and so we just did, over the weekend, I was talking to one of our officers, and she was telling me how she just got back from a drug testing. So, she is certified in identifying drugs because I was asking, so how are you able to identify marijuana, especially if they legalize it. By the way, the Chief has certification in that he can identify. He looked at me the other day, and I said Chief (inaudible).

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said but he is certified, so he is very aggressive in terms of getting his people trained.

Again, to go back to the high level, we have identified these two issues. What else?

Vice Mayor Grendel asked was Service one of those?

Mayor Kurtz said the Service Department, everybody identified it, and I think it was a 1976 building. It was in the worst condition in terms of the GPD study, review of our building infrastructure; and so I am challenged.

Finance Director Blaze asked what does that mean, the worst condition? It's a brick and block building. What's to be bad about it? You have a concrete floor. You have a big open room, and you have brick and block construction. Unless they are saying the roof is bad or something, I don't know what that means that it's the worst building.

Mayor Kurtz said that means your HVAC system, the condition of the concrete, the condition of the walls, the condition of the facility itself. The electrical system, everything is 1976 vintage, and so you don't have radiant heat in the floors like all the new buildings do to protect your

equipment. We don't have the amenities today. They weren't popular, they weren't the way to go back then. We think we are going to do that.

Councilperson Veverka asked what's the age of the wash area? Wasn't that added on in addition to the original building? So, that part is new.

Mayor Kurtz said there were a couple of additions.

Councilperson Veverka said right.

Mayor Kurtz said there were several different additions.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked how old are those?

Mayor Kurtz said off the top of my head, less than 30 years.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said the early 1990s.

Councilperson Trakas said we also have a lot more equipment.

Mayor Kurtz said you are spot on. The service we provide, and the level of service, and the amount of service we provide today, there's no corresponding relevancy to what we did in 1976, 1986, and even 1996.

Councilperson Trakas said, and tonight we are about to make another purchase.

Mayor Kurtz said, and those are 30 or 40 year decisions.

Vice Mayor Grendel said the money invested in the equipment, you want to get every year you can get out of it.

Mayor Kurtz said that's why the new facilities all have radiant heat. They all have different amenities that protect the equipment and make sure that it's all maintained. It's cleaned properly, and maintained properly. We do a good job with what we have. We just don't have enough room for what we have, and so the thought is that I think you go back high level. It warrants discussion. Do we renovate, whether it be new, and then it be all the different components that go into it. If it's renovation, you have to decide. If it's new, where? So, it definitely warrants discussion, and again to his credit, the Service Director is very passionate about making sure that there is structure to that department. The people that are in it, and also to the future. So, it's not as though we would knock that building down. There would be some other purpose for it, just not the activity level that we have today with all of our equipment.

Councilperson Veverka said but you can't beat the location. The location is snuggled up against the highway without having any residents having to complain about having a diesel truck starting up, plows starting up in the middle of the night, and all the other things. That is a really good spot as far as it's isolation, but it's still centrally located.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said if I could ever make everybody at this table happy.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Finance Director Blaze said just go up by helicopter and do that 10,000 foot view. You have recreational. We have educational, institutional, culture uses, and then we have an industrial property right there. That is the red-headed stepchild that doesn't belong.

Mayor Kurtz said everybody is entitled to their perspective and their opinion.

Councilperson Veverka said you just want to put it in the middle of Hillside Road where the school is.

Finance Director Blaze said put it in an industrial area because that's the use it is.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said the bottom line is sometimes you just throw things on the wall, and you see what you can get to stick. It was clear that there was not a consensus there, but look at, the goal is to do exactly just that; and I am discounting what the Finance Director has to say. Find me a location. Unless you can find a better location for our use and our need in our community, then you have to stay focused, but that is one of our purposes. That is one of our jobs is to explore all of our opportunities, and if we can hone in on something that's appropriate, we all win. The community wins for decades to come.

The Service garage is definitely a priority because what we did in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and we do 2020, 2030, 2040, and the cost of equipment is so, even if you are not taking care of it appropriately, maintaining appropriately. I can tell you having heavy equipment over the years and leaving it outside, it is not good. Leave your car outside, you sleep outside and start up in the morning. It still has an impact even if your oil is heated, your engines are heated.

Councilperson Trakas said you said something earlier that I thought it was pretty good because it's kind of like the schools' facility commission, I have never seen them ever under any circumstance since 1999 say you should renovate this school because there's nothing in it for them for any renovations. So, the fact that we have experts now on our staff that can have an objective evaluation of our buildings, our workflows, I think that's really key. So, in my opinion, I wouldn't have a lot of "experts" come in and tell us. Experts have a bias. Our own internal people won't have bias, unless they need to have some type of an expertise.

Mayor Kurtz said with certain systems, you can get people in there, and they will give you a report.

Councilperson Trakas said I'm just saying, I think you have two facilities that could complement each other. Let's look at both of those facilities. I wouldn't think of the one we have on Old Brecksville Road. It could be a storage area, but it's also a functional facility that the Department of Transportation used. It's older. So, in combination, what can we do with those two facilities? The fact that we have this campus here does kind of bias a little bit that well you do have a campus, and there are some synergies to having a campus together. So, I think we have to look at that as well. Again, I think as you have internal evaluators who don't have a bias, I think that's going to be helpful.

Finance Director Blaze said everybody has a bias Jim.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said you go back to 1976, Patty Woodrick was opposed to putting it where it's at, no bias. That's right, she lived over there, and Selig didn't exist. It's real.

Finance Director Blaze said there's a long distance between Patty's house and the Service garage.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said, and Mayor my question for the group is how do we want to move on this stuff? There are a dozen things in here. You said that there is no bad idea, but many of these were discussed last year. I don't think an idea if we made some progress on it this year. If the Service Department is a three year project, then hopefully we can make progress. It's hard to get nine people together and say okay we are going to talk on this. So, is it divide and conquer any of these? Is it pick it, somebody mentioned rental properties; none of our existing committees are going to touch on rental properties. If somebody wants to bring that up, do you want to talk about this?

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said like the Tuesday before Council, like a time if you want to meet? When does anybody want to get together? I'm not sure there's a committee for the Police Station. I am up for that. Let's set some strategic meetings.

Mayor Kurtz said the library is a two party issue, and we should focus on it. The Service Department and Police Department is another; and if we walk away today just saying, identify those are the two highest priorities, infrastructure priorities, then I am okay with that because it's a lot of heavy lifting just in those two. The rest of them, we are always reviewing. These are not something, you will know what the requests are, the Recreation Department, Community Services, requests out of the Service Department. Everyone is always trying to think of future programs, think of future upgrades to the pools; so they are stagnant. No one is stagnant.

They also recognize there is a limited financial capacity. These are not. These are a different category. These demand some type of financing. When you start talking \$10,000,000 or \$20,000,000 issues, they are going to be financed, either internally or externally. So, that's what I wanted to hear today. I wanted to walk away with a priority list of four or five issues that we can sink our teeth in and invest some time, effort and money into and come back and engage Council so that you are comfortable making the decision. In a perfect world for me, I would love to be able to research a Service Department and come back and say okay we have honed in on this. The vast majority agree to this. We have all had input, now let's move forward with the next step.

The Police Department is the same thing. We have explored it, we have honed in on a couple of different options. Everyone at the table, and now we get in and drill down. We drill down until you make a decision, and then move forward. Just knowing those three items, and if there's something else we missed, or something else you want to talk about, we have some more time.

Councilperson Narduzzi said alternative housing.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked how hard is it to pinpoint specific locations, whether it's a Police station or Service garage because then I think it would be a lot easier for us to picture in our head what a facility would look like, whether it's over there or across the street. What location on Rockside? What parcel?

Mayor Kurtz said maybe we show you what some options are, and you use your collective knowledge, not individually, but collectively, to think of a location that maybe we haven't thought about or an opportunity that we haven't thought about. There is a lot of brain power at this table that can make a difference. That's our job is to provide leadership for some of these decisions, and so it's not mine, it's not one of yours, it's everybody, the majority saying here's what we should do. Here's a direction.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said you mentioned in the past a piece of property for a Service Department, but then Vern mentions he wants it in an industrial setting. Well, you have an idea of an industrial setting where you would like to see it, and then so maybe all of us can picture it in our head.

Mayor Kurtz said everyone at the table has that opportunity, and listening to your constituents. I listen to people in the community that talk about, have concerns. I communicate people who see me, and they will ask me about a Service Department. They hear we are talking about it. They know we are talking about a Police Department. Some of them are passionate about doing something on Rockside Road, and some of them aren't. So, collectively, if we start having these discussions and hone in on something, I think that's probably how we are getting to a starting point. The starting point is not all the research that we do, all the planning we do, it's when we put ourselves in a position to have the plans and then finance and then build. Then make it work.

Councilperson Togliatti asked so then are we throwing the option of adaptive reuse to the potential expansion of both of these facilities? Is that still on the table? It sounds like we are going towards locations and blueprints.

Mayor Kurtz said I think we can do parallel paths. That is what we do in the private industry, do parallel paths. What is it going to cost me to renovate this? Can I achieve my over-arching goals with it? If I can't achieve my over-arching goal, then I dismiss it, and one of those might be cost. One of those may be efficiency, and if I can't achieve it, until I can't achieve it, but I will still look at that as one of my options.

Councilperson Togliatti said I would like to start with the adaptive reuse expansion and exhaust that before, if you do two parallel paths, and you end up on a renovation, then you wasted money on the exploration of a new structure.

Mayor Kurtz said well only if you are investing in architects, and people are very open. Mayors have been very open. The Service Director has been very open to helping. They are proud of what they have. They are proud of their facilities, and just say that they helped Independence with theirs, or they used ours as a template. There is some opportunity there, and it just makes us more efficient that we are not just wasting time going down one path; but actually we are looking at both paths at the same time. Then at some point, when you get to the Y, you have to make a decision, you know, and then you do it. The Chief and the Service Director have done some preliminary work. They have been researching some of these things. So, yes we can go down this parallel path and determine to what extent it makes sense to renovate, to build new, to do a hybrid. Hybrid might be something else.

Councilperson Trakas said in Mason, Ohio there's another justice center, Police complex that you might really want to take a look at. It's got a great workflow there. Now that's a municipal court as well.

Mayor Kurtz said Mason has a nice Police Department too.

Councilperson Trakas said they have their act together.

Several people began speaking at once.

Vice Mayor Grendel said wasn't it one time they talked about the Service Department down on Pleasant Valley. I don't know if there's anything available, but that's an industrial area. I think Vern you wouldn't bother any residents.

Mayor Kurtz said we are exploring that.

Vice Mayor Grendel said isn't there a vacant building. I don't know if you would consider that property.

Mayor Kurtz said we did look at several buildings over the years, either they weren't big enough, the footprint wasn't big enough to accommodate all of the needs. Again, this is good because we are going to have those discussions.

Is there anything else that we missed in the over-arching goal? Housing. Well housing, we closed on the Concordia property and Jess will present everything to you. All of you will receive a packet on what the next step is. Absolutely, everyone should weigh in on how you want to go forward because it's what is best for the community. There are definitely a number of people that were waiting for this opportunity to come by. They are still waiting. Fortunately, they are not moving today, and we will just see how well this fits into an overall Master Plan and go from there. Yes, Jess will update us all on the status of what she has put together, at least housing when it comes to the center of town because there are two components in the center of town. There's Concordia, and then there is the downtown property.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Narduzzi said now that we have Concordia, we have to stay focused on that because I think we have to spend some money on infrastructure. We are just not going to sell that to a developer. We are going to be in control of that for some time, and then also downtown. We talked about alternative housing down there, and I have some good ideas for down there. My daughter and Danny they live (inaudible). You have to get out of that picture of single-family houses. It's gorgeous, and it's a high rent district. It's not going to be for everybody. I think we are getting closer to thinking outside of the box. I think we might be at the point now that if we are going to do something in downtown, it's not going to be your normal smaller houses, smaller lots. It has to be connected. I don't want to call it apartments because it wouldn't be apartments, but some kind of townhouse or row house. It's big time stuff guys. It's beautiful.

Councilperson Veverka said but one other thing to be aware of, we are going to vote on Kleber Court's reconstruction, the water lines, sewers, sidewalks, road surface. It's about 800 feet, plus or minus. Well to get us back from Brecksville Road back to the Concordia property is maybe half again that distance. So, you are looking at approximately \$1,500,000 for infrastructure just to get there for somebody to begin. So, that's something. It's easy to say that's a great area, that will be a nice thing to develop, but there's going to have to be a major capital expense just to get to the point of having access to it.

Councilperson Narduzzi said well we can recoup that.

Finance Director Blaze said I kind of disagree Tom, I think that's going to be on a developer's back.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I'm saying we can recoup that. We are not going to pay for that.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said I'm sorry Dale if you were under the impression the City is going to pay for all of that.

Councilperson Veverka said well I am just saying one way or another that \$1,500,000 is going to go on to, if it's 30 homes, if it's 50 homes; however many homes. It's not just the cost of the home itself, but the additional structure involved. So, we are getting way beyond what we thought was a reasonable cost when we were talking about the school property. Now we are talking about elevating another \$75,000 or \$100,000 for living unit because you have to pick up that cost.

Mayor Kurtz said I'm not sure of the amount. I don't know how you came up with that amount, that evaluation. I would have to look at that.

Councilperson Veverka said just working off the \$1,000,000.

Mayor Kurtz asked what's the alternative? Do you want to do nothing?

Councilperson Veverka said I'm just saying, but I mean know there's a legitimate cost upfront that it would be recouped, I get that; but I am just saying that money has to come from somewhere.

Mayor Kurtz said I would say this, developers don't want to see that, they will let us know. It's still a good investment for the property. So, either way the City protects the property or invests in the property to keep people here that are City residents. I am sorry you were under the impression that the City was going to pay for that.

Councilperson Togliatti asked do you envision new housing on the old Fortlage property north of Concordia Church?

Mayor Kurtz said eventually. The City owns that, so we can make some money on that and take care of our residents.

Finance Director Blaze said, and I don't think there's a final design for the subdivision yet, but that will be answered at that time whether it's now or in the future or never, that particular piece.

Mayor Kurtz said, so I think the bottom line is on that property, either way it was a good investment. So, that's what the people told me.

Councilperson Trakas asked how close is Jessica to unveiling this?

Mayor Kurtz said I think she's going to report to all of us in terms of next steps. So, it could be today even. I am not sure.

Councilperson Trakas said what I would suggest to go along with what John was saying, why don't we put together a schedule of either committees or meetings of the whole or whatever, and

have a singular topic for that day. So, I think from the Economic Development Department. So, I am thinking maybe we put together that schedule every three weeks, whatever it might be so there's a topic and then follow-up topic so all year long we are going through this until we have the definitive as to what we want.

Mayor Kurtz said that's great because the rest of the other infrastructure projects, the roads and stuff, they are moving along no matter what. Kleber is going to be at Council, and by the way, the prices were really good.

Vice Mayor Grendel said a lot lower.

Mayor Kurtz said yes, and very competitive. There were four bids.

Vice Mayor Grendel said in regard to that, I know that's going to be a part of the Caucus, but I wouldn't mind even going with the alternate with the lighting.

Mayor Kurtz said well we have to define that first.

Vice Mayor Grendel said for the price to have it.

Mayor Kurtz said before we do that though, I think, keep in mind, we have that discussion, and we put it in there to be complete; but I want to have a meeting with the residents in a couple of weeks. Don said he will be ready in two or three weeks, and there is a great impact. We will put the sidewalks on the one side. We are squeezing down the houses. If you drive that, you know they are pretty tight, and the lights today are on the poles. The poles are on the north side of the street, and if you try to put lights on the south side, you are going to be right in somebody's window. So, we are not making that decision. If they decide that, Council can come back, and we can amend that; but the thought was we are excited about the bid. We want to get going, and there are a few logistical issues that we have to work, but Don told me in the next two or three weeks he should have answers.

The point I am trying to make is about infrastructure, that's one project. We are working on the route 21 project, which is a big project which we will talk about later in Executive Session. We will talk about some of the other different, all the maintenance projects we have going. So, there are a lot of moving parts this year to say the least.

Councilperson Veverka said Dave just a side comment. You say it's only another \$140,000, but there are less than 20 houses on that segment of the road. That would be the investment of about \$8,000 per house.

Vice Mayor Grendel said but I think we have invested how much money in that area for the last 50 years.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Veverka said I don't begrudge them that, but the other piece of that puzzle is so then are we going to put decorative lighting in every other place that we do? I don't know that answer.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we put the lighting on Dora, Elmarge.

Mayor Kurtz said we didn't incorporate it because we are not sure that's what they want because of the proximity. It's unique. We don't have 75 setbacks. We don't have 60 foot of right-of-way. We don't have all the normal elements that normally go into a project of this size. We have 50 foot of right-of-way. We will have the meeting, and then we will talk to them about it, and we will see. We will show them a couple of different options. One of them is doing something on those poles which is what they have today; and so our goal is to just pass that legislation, get moving, have our meeting in the next three weeks and get that done this season.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I like the idea on Lafayette they are going to be putting that mastic seal on that too. That's a big investment we made a few years ago, and I think it really does help.

Mayor Kurtz said, so there's a lot of things that are going to happen this year. There are a lot of things that are planned this year like 21, the next phase of 21; and that's a big project. There is a lot of opportunity there to do some things. Plus, we have the Mormon Church that they finally knocked on the City's door and finally said hello and introduced themselves. So, we have that dynamic to address. There's a lot of different things that are coming together.

Councilperson Veverka said, I'm going to piggyback on Jim's idea though. I think that it probably would make sense for us as a group to focus on one particular topic. I mean I get concerned because of the number of different directions we are going. To me it makes sense if we decide that it's the Police station, or if we decide that the highest priority is the Service Center, then put all of our efforts in the direction of whichever one of those projects it is. I don't want to say beat it to death, but get it to the point that we can make some sort of movement in that direction. That would be my suggestion. I don't know what the rest of you think.

Mayor Kurtz said I think the fact that you took it from a potential discussion point today to we focused on two, I think it's commendable. It's great progress, and then John suggested, let's just put our focus and attention on these. Then we can watch how quickly we can develop something. I told my concept is a three year plan on Service, but this is our year to get everything dialed in. Next year we can design and go through that process.

Councilperson Trakas said there's a lot to do.

Mayor Kurtz said because then it's going to be about financing. Plus, we have a lot of different projects going on, so this is good.

Anything we missed in terms of something that is a priority to somebody? The housing, you will get a summary on that. It's just one component, but it's something that we will have discussions on, continuous discussions.

Councilperson Trakas said I also think too to kind of go along with that, so we all talked about aging housing stock. There's ways we can help that. So, maybe we should get that on the table and say what can we do to do that. Are there incentives that we can do? I thought Vern had a tremendous idea about trying to help our business community to revamp their buildings. So, I look at Cleveland, and I worked in the Leader Building for 10 glorious years; and when the internet came, we were on the information cul-de-sac. There was nothing going on in our place, and they wire and everything. So, our business stock is also a place where these buildings were built 50 years ago now, 40 years ago, 30 years ago. So, are there programs we can put together in conjunction with those things to upgrade the buildings, to make changes to how businesses are going? The same thing with housing, are there things we can do to help our residents to keep their houses up to snuff, and these are ideas that we really have to champion. So, maybe part of keeping me in town is making my house less 1951 and more 2031. I think we should keep talking about these things as it relates to the topics that we are going through, not just kind of be narrow about it; but let's keep going on that three year plan. These are things that we want to try to accomplish.

Mayor Kurtz said to complement what you are saying that the City has done a really nice job of having a lot programs, a lot of opportunities to incentivize the population to stay here because they don't want to leave the amenities that they have. There's not a week goes by that someone, I talk to somebody, see somebody, that they don't identify the fact that the Civic Center, identify the programs and the different services that we provide as an over-arching reason for them to stay here. So, we do that, but I understand what you are saying. Can we refine that more is what you are saying?

Councilperson Trakas said exactly.

Vice Mayor Grendel said, so Mayor, do you just want Council to pick one project and go with it.

Mayor Kurtz said I think if Council would indulge me. I would be a little disingenuous if I told the Chief or the Service Director that one of them is a priority. So, if you don't mind.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think those are the two that I think everybody focused on the most, those areas.

Mayor Kurtz said if you don't mind.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I would think we should schedule our next meeting, either for next Tuesday or the Tuesday after that if we would like to keep the momentum going. I don't know what everybody's schedule looks like.

Mayor Kurtz said I think what you said is we want to look at these two opportunities. So, let me have these guys put an agenda together and come back to you.

Councilperson Trakas said may I suggest real quickly that we do this on a regular basis, and that we have Police, Service, housing as three topics we always talk about; and then if we need to add a fourth, then we add a fourth, so we can keep the project going.

Mayor Kurtz said that's fine.

Councilperson Trakas said and from my perspective, I am in Columbus a lot, so if we can do them later in the afternoon, it would work.

Councilperson Narduzzi said let's meet for an hour before each Council meeting.

Councilperson Trakas said we will need more time than that.

Mayor Kurtz said it takes time to do the legwork that you are talking about, if you really want to be effective.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we want to make it fair.

Mayor Kurtz said in a week, I am sure we can accomplish that. I will tell them hey you are in the queue. You have to do a complete analysis, renovate, new, where? They can start putting all the different information together.

Vice Mayor Grendel said Mayor maybe it will be up to you to pick which one that's farther along and which one is prepared first. It could be Service or Police.

Mayor Kurtz said we might do one and then the other one. It doesn't matter.

Finance Director Blaze said Councilperson Veverka's point is well taken, trying to make 40 issues a priority, and none of them will become a priority; but I think there's enough brain power at this table to handle more than one issue at a time too. So, it's entirely doable.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think the two most pressing.

Councilperson Veverka said and something that I think would be especially helpful, obviously we had the architect's drawings of the Police Department; and the multiple levels to get some nice sized exploded views of what is there and how it's currently being used. I think that's something that wouldn't be too hard to have the Chief do, and then the same with the Service Department. Have that provided with labeling and some other things on it because you know personally I would like to start with something concrete. It's a lot easier then to look at areas like is this a major used area? Is this a functional area? If you start with that, and then possibly a blank copy of something like that might be worthwhile to have.

Mayor Kurtz said Dave can bring a couple of those markers, and everybody can start marking them up.

Councilperson Veverka said all the colors.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I was thinking in a couple of weeks you said we want to be ready, but in a couple of weeks take a look at the Police Department. We can go in there for an hour or two and just see or visualize. We were just talking about it, some of us haven't been there for a while. I would like to actually go in there and see what it looks like.

The same thing with the Service Department.

Mayor Kurtz said I will talk to the Chief, and we will schedule a time. We can either do it in an hour or two before the Planning Commission, or we can do it before a Council meeting. We can just keep this ball rolling.

Vice Mayor Grendel said it would be nice to see what we have.

Mayor Kurtz said that's a good idea.

Vice Mayor Grendel said this way we will see what they have.

Mayor Kurtz said those are the two foundational elements. We are going to do a quick tour of the existing, and then some blueprints of the existing; so that you can at least have a foundation to discuss.

Councilperson Trakas said one other quick item that we didn't talk about extensively, and I just wanted to get everybody's feedback on. You brought something up about underground infrastructure. Would it be okay with everybody if somebody took a little bit of an exploration on underground infrastructure and how we might be able to accomplish some of those. We had a meeting a couple of years ago, and we had that one consultant, the guy from Akron or whatever it was and who disappeared on us. We were talking about, remember him, that was a good idea. We were talking about how to get broadband, everybody on.

Mayor Kurtz said you are saying utilities, how to identify whether the potential connectivity, and even we can get water lines, sewer lines.

Councilperson Trakas said the other thing, we also have these hundreds of projects that have been on the book for years, backyard projects and that type of thing; but they are real quality of life projects. We all get the phone calls, my gutters. Let's take a look at a global approach to that and see if there's anything we can do on a big picture where we might be able to leverage some of these Federal funds or something, maybe do our own thing on it. Put together a plan, over and above just the stuff that's public, to help our residents out. There are still a lot of people that have real problems, and we did get a great maintenance and all those programs are valuable; but there's fundamental flooding problems. It's the same neighborhoods every year go through the same thing, and it's private property, and we are kind of like good luck.

Mayor Kurtz said we have had actually because of your initiative of the coordination with Council on that program, we have had people participate in those cost-sharing things where the City picks up a smaller portion, and they pick up and sign off, and it works. So, those types of initiatives and plans are still active.

Councilperson Togliatti said getting back to these two initiatives. If we could have, well we just purchased the ODOT property, now we currently have two functional Service garages and Service yards. If we can have some sort of operational plan on what the two facilities, and what is occurring at each and how we are utilizing them.

Mayor Kurtz said sure. Simply stated, the ODOT is a storage, and it is used today for salt. So, but the other facility is our Service garage.

Councilperson Veverka asked so, we are not keeping any vehicle or equipment there?

Mayor Kurtz said just storing different seasonal stuff. We put some stuff there, but nothing, it's just storage. There is no manpower, no additional people that are going to be at that site. It's strictly to help us, like today it's a great opportunity; and we are using it for salt storage. We can incorporate that into our overall plan.

Our time has expired for today. We will look for the first Tuesday in April before the Planning Commission. We will get the information if you want to do a tour at that time. I will coordinate with the Vice Mayor, and we will get everything out to everybody. How's that?

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I think a Public Lands and Buildings meeting was planned for that date.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said we will talk to the Chairperson of that committee, and maybe we can spend some time.

Councilperson Togliatti said and in respect to that for housekeeping, this meeting was Council Workshop, and it really I think should be a Council Strategic Planning session so that the meetings are grouped together with all the other strategic planning meetings. If you go back and refresh yourself, you don't have to search through all the different Council Workshop meetings. I don't know if we can legally change that since it's been advertised and posted.

Mayor Kurtz said, well you can put a slash and add Strategic Planning.

Councilperson Togliatti said so, the Minutes could be warehoused with the other Strategic Planning Minutes.

Mayor Kurtz said we can identify it so people can have access to it.

The Clerk agreed.

Vice Mayor Grendel said maybe bring back a practice from a few years ago where we did take a tour of some of our buildings, public lands and buildings. We would go to the Civic Center. I remember going on the roof there with Dave Snyderburn and seeing exactly. So, if we can plan that, and the roads too. We did that. We took a bus ride. Really to visualize it and see it in person. It makes your decision-making a lot easier because you have seen the problem. It was good to see. Even going to Town Hall.

Finance Director Blaze said Dale when you do the Streets tour, since you are a biker, the best way to see the streets is to ride a bike. So, we are going to do the bike tour for the streets.

Moved by Veverka, seconded by DiGeronimo to adjourn the Council Workshop of March 14, 2023 meeting. Voice Vote: 7 yes/0 no; motion carried.

There being no further business, the Council Workshop of March 14, 2023, was adjourned at 4:37 p.m.

Debra J. Beal, Clerk of Council
Minutes Unapproved at Time of Release 03/17/23
