

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE  
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES  
MARCH 23, 2021 AT 4:00 P.M.  
VIA ZOOM**

Present: Chairperson Kathleen Kapusta  
Councilperson Jim Trakas  
Councilperson Chris Walchanowicz

Also Present: Councilperson Kenn Synek  
Councilperson Dale Veverka  
Finance Director Blaze  
Recreation Director Tom Walchanowicz  
Community Services Office Coordinator Amber Veverka  
Clerk of Court Angie Zidanic (left at 4:16 p.m.)  
Recreation Department Employee Eric Sarley

Chairperson Kapusta called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

Chairperson Kapusta said we will jump right into the meeting, and if we could start by asking Angie if you would give us some updates on the Drug Prevention Program and what has been going on please.

Clerk of Court Angie Zidanic said definitely. Thank you very much Chairperson Kapusta. So, our most recent accomplishment was our partnership with the Independence Local Schools in showing the virtual movie of Angst. I don't know if anybody here was able to view the movie. Did anybody view it? So, this has been done in many districts already, and we had been talking about it for some time and decided that the time was right with Covid and all the anxiety that is surrounding that and the social isolation of our children, it would be a good time for us to show the movie. We did it virtually, which ended up working in our favor because in the past you would have like a community showing. The movie was shown one night at like the middle school or high school or whatever; but because of Covid, it was virtual. We had probably almost 300 attendees who viewed the movie. It was on March 18<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

Another benefit was that for schools that had done the in-person prior to Covid, there is a panel of experts who are interviewed in the film, and to bring those experts into their community for the question and answer session was very expensive. They would have to pay for travel. They come from all over the country. They would have to pay hotel expenses, etc., but because it was virtual, we were able to have the national experts available for question and answer after our showing. The price of the whole thing is much less than it was had we done it in person.

In addition to that, the schools also had a viewing, totally separate from this, as an in-service for the teachers, the staff; and I talked to Sandy McCullough, and she said it was very well received.

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It went very well. There was a hardy question and answer afterwards as well. What we are hoping is that this movie because students and family and adults talked openly about their struggles with anxiety. They talked about it being an issue that starts in the brain, it's not just somebody being anxious. There are things that happen in the brain that cause this and just hopefully bring more awareness surrounding this topic; and also maybe to inspire more families in Independence to openly talk about it if there is an issue and to seek help. I will talk a little bit later about the Prevention Specialist; but she does see anxiety as definitely on her caseload of issues. Does anybody have any questions about the movie?

Okay, so there are also, and I do consider these drug prevention initiatives because I believe that any support that you can give surrounding any kind of emotional support for kids is definitely contributing to keeping them making positive choices, and our new principal, Jamie Hogue, at the high school is planning to roll out a couple of social emotional learning initiatives as well. He had some targeted for even this school year. I don't know if that's going to happen, but for sure the next school year. There is one program that is called Actively Caring for People which a lot of schools have brought in as a follow-up to Rachel's Challenge, which you know we have done as a community twice now. It can be expensive to bring Mr. Scott back and even others from the program; so this is going to be a program that's going to embrace those same values.

Then he is also looking at two other programs. They are gender based; so one will be for girls, one will be for boys. They will be divided up, and this program is going to deal with positive self-image, making positive decisions, having good relationships, building empathy for others and removing stigmas which I think is something we are probably going to be talking about a lot in Independence, especially with the Angst movie.

At the middle school, Principal Jamie Vanek, is also implementing some programs. He has a character program for young men, and it is going to surround the values which include ownership, servant leadership, purpose and compassion; and this is going to be taught by male staff members. Jim Eller from Campus Life is also going to be helping out with that program.

I have to say that at our last 25 and Alive meeting, both of the principals asked Jim Eller to start coming back into the lunchroom. They wanted that lunchroom assistance. They want him to be able to connect with students; so he did start doing that again. They are very, very grateful for his help and for his assistance.

The Campus Life, they have really had some challenges with Covid, but I don't know if we talked about this last time; but Jim started a ski club. I love the way they just are forward thinking. So, when indoor club activities had to cease for a while, they moved it outside. The school could not have a ski club at that time. I think it's great the way they look forward and move forward; and they are continuing to build on those activities. They have the middle school boys group. They also have high school guys and girls groups and another middle school girls group that will be moving to the Civic Center in March.

From our Prevention Specialist, Alexa Belcon, she has received 33 new referrals for the 2021 school year. There were 9 students from the primary school, 10 from the middle schools and 13 referrals from the high school and 1 from the City. There are 23 referrals that have continued

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from last year. So, that would be a total of 56 students, but of those, 5 are still waiting for parent consent and 3 families unfortunately have declined services. So, there are 48 students on her caseload right now, and none are receiving virtual sessions. These are all in-person sessions for her now. Either the ones that were virtual had either wrapped up, or they are back in school now.

Chairperson Kapusta said a significant number Angie.

Clerk of Court Zidanic said I think so too. For a small district, and the topics again include responses to Covid, healthy coping mechanisms, suicide and its impact. Of course, anxiety, depression, trauma, grief and loss, family and peer conflict, stress management and substance abuse. These are all the issues that she is seeing with that. Does anybody have any questions?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said I just want to comment that Jim Eller is doing a great job. He's going to help us with a couple of our programs. He's a very, very nice guy, good personality; I think you really got a winner there with him.

Clerk of Court Zidanic said thank you Tom.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said the other thing was Angie do you know how many people participated in the movie, the anxiety movie, last week?

Clerk of Court Zidanic said the community event, what I did, just before the meeting Sandy sent me the list; and here's what happened. I had to go through it; so I am going to say there were about 275 people. Some people were on there twice because maybe they logged on, and they got booted off for some reason. So, I went through, and I deleted people that were duplicates. Some people were marked as a no that they didn't attend, but it showed that they were on the session for 75 minutes and 83 minutes; so even if said no I counted them because they were there in the session. So, even with my edits to that spreadsheet, it came out to about 275 people, which again, I think it would have been better attended than even an in-person session. It's very hard for parents to get out at night in the evenings; so I am very happy with our attendance numbers.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said I thought it was a very good presentation too, I liked it.

Clerk of Court Zidanic said thank you Tom. It certainly was eye opening, and we are discussing follow ups to this. Angst does have, it's a trilogy so there are 2 other movies associated with this. Of course it's going to be in conjunction with the schools to determine if we are going to go in that direction or maybe we will do something else surrounding anxiety. We are planning a follow up to that.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said thank you.

Clerk of Court Zidanic asked Jim did you have a question?

Councilperson Trakas said I just was curious if you could when you have a chance Angie, could you send the course outline for those courses that they are going to be taught in the school, the

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self-esteem courses. I would just like to kind of see what topics they are going over with the young people.

Clerk of Court Zidanic said I can ask Jamie Hogue for them. I know that I don't have them, but I do have a little more detail on that. So, for the one at the middle school, they are going to be talking about unplug and reconnect, this is the middle school program, social media awareness and digital citizenship, follow up and follow through, the future you and leading and leaving a legacy. So, these are some of the things that the middle school program will address. I will see if Jamie Hogue has an outline for the other one; but I can tell you that the name of that program that Principal Hogue is doing is called Actively Caring for People. Then the 2 gender based ones, the one for girls is called Ruling our Experiences, and the one for boys is called A Call to Men.

Councilperson Trakas said thanks. If you have any more details, that would be interesting to see. I think social media particularly during the pandemic has had a real effect on people, and I'm not sure it's always positive. So, I am glad to see that's one of the topics you are going to talk about. Sometimes you get in these unreal situations that social media creates, and you forget what the reality of the everyday world really is. That's very helpful, thank you.

Clerk of Court Zidanic said you are welcome. Anything else? Well thank you again for inviting me to your meetings and feel free to call with any questions if you should have any.

Councilperson Trakas said one other thing. Just out of curiosity from your experience with the Court, a similar issue; but I know that late last year when we had that, and earlier this year when there was a rash of car break-ins throughout all the suburbs. They were talking about unadjudicated youths through Juvenile Court. I was just curious, has that situation rectified? Have they opened the courts back up yet, just if you might be able to explain that.

Clerk of Court Zidanic said well I can tell you about our experience with Juvenile Court, I don't think that we would ever see the break-ins because that would probably be more at the felony level; but what they are doing now is everybody goes to the intervention center. So, the intervention center will do a series of assessments to determine if that child is eligible for diversion, which means they would come back to our city for diversion; or if they are determined to have some other mental health needs, they may go in a different direction.

We were fortunate to have a case where Juvenile Court determined that they sent it back to us for intervention; and we have actually been able to work hand-in-hand with Juvenile Court. Again, outside the box, it's something that's never been done anymore; but we determined that there was some additional assistance needed and because of that, we were able to work directly with Juvenile Court. In fact, we have had several Zoom meetings as a team, and that team includes myself, Cindy from my office, people from the school, the Independence Local Schools, and Juvenile Court. So, it's actually gone very, very well.

Councilperson Trakas said super, that's good. I was just curious if the Court had been opening it at the felony level, but you answered my question very well, and I really appreciate it. Thank you.

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Chairperson Kapusta said Angie thanks for taking time again from your schedule. We all, I am sure, I can speak for us all on Council, feel it's very important to keep that link with the schools; and you do a great job in doing that for us and communicating that to us. I appreciate that.

Clerk of Court Zidanic said thank you so much everybody. Bye.

Chairperson Kapusta said alright, we will move on to the second agenda item; we have the Recreation Department. Tom, would you like to take that over?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said I'm just going to pull up a Power Point here.

Finance Director Blaze said hey Tom if you are in that room, down in the Caucus Room, make sure that little speaker device there is taken off the window sill and the floor and put on the table in the middle of you. It will help your voices modulate good.

Chairperson Kapusta said thanks Vern.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said thanks, I didn't realize that had to be there. Is that better? Can you hear me better?

Chairperson Kapusta said we can hear you, it's still a little muffled perhaps in my view.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz asked Kathleen is that better?

Finance Director Blaze said that is.

Chairperson Kapusta said that's substantially better.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said okay, great.

I am going to go through this here, facilities, programs and the upcoming events that we have scheduled. So, to start with our facilities, I am reviewing the past quarter from basically the end of December through now.

So, over at the Civic Center, we extended our hours on the weekends by 2 hours; so now on Saturdays we are open until 4:00 p.m., and Sundays we are open to 3:00 p.m. So, we did start extending our hours, and people are very appreciative of that. The attendance has started to go up at the Civic Center, especially since everybody is getting into the New Years' Resolutions after the first of the year; so that's when it really took off.

Over at the Fieldhouse, we started weekend hours. We are doing 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. both days, and we got a very good positive reception on that also because again, and the month of February was a very rough month as far as the weather; and people couldn't get outside. So, there were a lot of people walking on the track at the Fieldhouse. So, that worked out really nice, and then also by not having these events over there; we were basically opened every weekend. We didn't have to close out to the events because normally when they were rented, like a Tucker

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Neale Tournament, it would exclude our residents from being able to use that building. So, we got a lot of good feedback on that, and then also our travel baseball, which they just began practicing in February and March; they were really appreciative of being able to get in there and use the courts for their program. So, it worked out very nice. Again, we are still not letting outside rentals in there at all, it's still residents; and it's the same with the Civic Center. We still have that restriction. So, that's still going on.

We did also extend some hours at the Fieldhouse. We did open up on Mondays and Fridays for 2 hours, and that was another good thing that we did that.

We talked to, actually they contacted us, Tom Dreiling from the schools, and with the Covid they had some issues with the wrestling program. So, they came to us looking for space, and we basically offered them the Elmwood Rec Building. They were basically in the Elmwood Rec Building solely themselves. I think we had like 2 or 3 blood banks and a couple of small meetings in the small meeting room there, but for the most part, the Elmwood Rec this past winter was dedicated to the wrestling team, and it worked out very nice. They were very appreciative of the facility, and they want to continue using that building for wrestling. So, we are in talks with the schools to see what we can work out as far as that goes. They even offered up possibly using the middle school for a couple of our events. So, we are going to see how that goes. Those pictures are just a couple of pictures of the wrestling team at the Elmwood Rec.

We did open up the showers at the Civic Center. They are one person use at a time; so we did open that.

Going on here, the high school had a good swim team season, a good safe one. We didn't have any outbreaks, anybody testing positive or anything; and Cee Lusk did a really nice job of that program. Again, we worked with them. There were a couple of home swim meets that we also had, and that ended up working out real nice.

Moving on to programs, we had our Junior Cavs Basketball Camp. We had 57 people, kids this year. We also did a Youth Volleyball Program, and that filled up with 18 participants. We have golf lessons planned, both for youths and adults; and those will be beginning in April.

Some programs that we did this year, we did the aerobic fitness classes, they returned to normal; so basically all of our adult aerobic classes are basically in normal mode, again, all with the current restrictions that we have in place from the Governor.

Linda and Claudia started a fun fitness and nutrition class on Friday evenings at the Civic Center, and again we had a class max of 15 participants. We had that fill up very quickly, and if we were able to accommodate 25, I bet we would have probably had 25 enroll in that class. Again, the new program that Linda and Claudia got together and came up with. It was a new offering for this year.

We had a good 2 week stretch of cold weather, and as you probably heard, the Elmwood pond was a big hit this winter. There were record crowds, the most I have ever seen out there. I know Vern I think you probably thought the same, except for back in the 1970's when we were out

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there skating; but it was record crowds that I can remember since the 1980's. So, it was a big hit. At times there were 35 plus people out there. There were a lot of residents using it, a lot of residents out there. We did get permission from the Fire Department to build a little fire out there. We had music piped in from the pool speakers, and it was a very nice atmosphere. We had some really nice weekend days. It was like 30 degrees, so it was the perfect temperature to be out, and it was a really nice thing that we did. That was down there, and people really participated in that activity.

Finance Director Blaze said the guy with the hockey stick in the lower right corner with the lime green top looks familiar.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said yeah that guy does look familiar over there.

Currently, the Rec Department and Community Services are working together on this coming Saturday's Easter event, the Bunny Trail. We have basically a full, I think 350 kids signed up. So, that will be a nice event.

Moving on here to the 2021 Planned Operations, at this time we are looking at opening the outdoor pool on time; so it will be opened Memorial Day weekend. We are hoping that the Board of Health and the State will relax some of the guidelines that were put in place last year. We are hoping to have all of our programs going on from our swim team to our swimming lessons to our diving classes. So, we are planning for all this, but again it's all up to what our guidelines are. Right now we are planning to do normal operations at the pool; but again we have to see what our guidelines will be.

We are booking out the pavilion, taking pavilion reservations. We have reduced capacity. We are going to have a maximum of 2 families at the Kiwanis Pavilion, and 1 family at the Annex Pavilion. So, we took the measurements of the buildings, and we just divided it up; and we are going by the current guidelines.

We are looking at slowly allowing some additional groups in the Elmwood Rec building. We are looking at some our men's evening leagues coming back possibly in April. So, we are going to see how that goes.

Our little league will begin on time, and the same thing, we will follow the current guidelines. Again, we have plans for the outdoor pool programs, swim teams, swim lessons. We are planning on doing some outdoor movies this summer. Obviously, the concerts in the park we have planned, similar to last year's events; and we have a summer fitness program which was started last year by the high school cross country coach. We are going to try to take that to the next level this year.

Our fireworks, we are still looking at doing events; I am not sure if we are going to have the July fireworks in July; but we are planning possibly to have Home Days in the park this year. More information on all of that is to follow.

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Does anybody have any questions on programs or activities at this point before I go on to capital?

Councilperson Trakas asked so Tom what are the protocols on the pool? It would seem to me that it might be one of the more difficult things to keep safe.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz asked are you talking the indoor pool Jim or the outdoor pool?

Councilperson Trakas said the outdoor pool, I am sorry.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said well as you know, we did open last year. We opened late, before we got everything in place; but the capacity was reduced at the outdoor pool. We are hoping this year that it's not reduced. We did keep it to residents only, and right now we will probably keep it to residents only, again unless the guidelines get changed. Social distancing will be in place, and the cleaning that we have in place will continue also.

Councilperson Trakas asked and what about like the shower rooms? Do those continue to be closed to the public?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said the showers at the outdoor pool will be open. We are going to put capacity limits in both of those.

Finance Director Blaze said that's probably a technical capacity limit because very few people use the outdoor showers to the extent that the indoor showers, unless you would disagree Recreation Director Walchanowicz. In my experience, the outdoor showers are used minimally.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz replied correct.

Finance Director Blaze said Councilperson Trakas, I also I think one of my contacts at Metro Health, not an MD, but on the medical side, pretty high up there; and he was even last year saying that he felt very safe and comfortable at the outdoor pool for three reasons. One, it was outdoors and not indoors. Secondly, you had the sunshine, and that sun helped he felt to kill any virus on any surfaces above and beyond the cleaning methods that the Rec staff team utilizes. Then three, the water, the chlorine, there is no science behind chlorine killing the Coronavirus; but he felt that since hundreds of people can be in the same body of water at the same time, chlorine kills a lot of bacteria, a lot of germs. So, he felt that was another added layer of comfort that him and his family could spend time at the outdoor pool, even last year. So, I have to think with so many people going to be vaccinated by Memorial Day weekend when the outdoor pool opens, that facility should be pretty safe this summer.

Councilperson Trakas said I hope so. I remember that situation in Oakwood when 20 to 25 people got infected real quick over there; so that's why I was still thinking about, just trying to figure out what the protocols were.

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Recreation Director Walchanowicz said in our pool Jim, you have to reserve the lap lanes and all that. Obviously with the social distancing in the whole building, wearing masks in the Civic Center and the buildings except for when you are working out; so we have everything still in place there. We are looking, I talked to Mickey Vittardi from Parma who is the Rec Director in Parma; and he's on that committee with the Governor. They are saying that there's possibly going to be some changes down the road if things keep getting better; so hopefully we have to keep our fingers crossed.

Chairperson Kapusta said Tom I have a question too. When you were talking earlier about the wrestling and the use of Elmwood for that; and then you indicated that we were talking with the middle school about possibly using, was that using some school facilities for some City functions? Is that what you were implying?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said yes, using the middle school gymnasium for some of our evening men's groups that we have. They offered up just 2 days a week that we would need to use their facility, and they said that would be fine if we get to that point to negotiations and all that. This is what the school did, they converted their wrestling rooms and expanded the weight room; so right now the wrestling room at the high school has become a large weight room. I haven't seen it myself, but that's what I am being told.

Chairperson Kapusta asked do you have anything further Tom?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said just talking about capital, just to give you an update of where we are at. The park vehicle that was ordered in November will be delivered at the end of this week. We did go down and take a look at it, and it's pictured here.

The Polar Trac, it will be delivered in the next few weeks, they were adding some attachments for it. So, that should be here within the next 2 weeks.

The bocce ball court upgrade, I can report that we just had a meeting yesterday evening with each of the league leaders, and there were 6 of us; and we went over a bunch of different plans, pictures, different ideas. I think we came up with a very good concept and a very economical concept at that point. So, I will have more on this within the next month; but we are probably going to plan to do this in the fall. That's what we all decided last night that it would be the best thing to do is to start this project in the fall. They all offered to maybe end their regular seasons a week or 2 early; but I think everybody is itching to get outside; so that's why we don't want to start this project in the spring and delay the bocce season. So, everybody felt that this would be the best route to go to do this in the fall and have it opened for next spring.

The splash pad, we are working on RFP's. We are planning to present something to Council this summer with anticipated construction starting at the end of this coming pool season; and again this would open up in spring of 2022. That's kind of a rendering of what we have; that's exactly how it's going to be, but that right there is a 30' x 60' area which is exactly what we are looking at. We are going to send out RFP's and try to come in and see what we get proposed to us.

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The next item we got for this year, again it's going to be a busy year for us. We have a lot of things on the agenda. The Civic Center locker room update, we met with the GPD Group about a month ago, and they are working on plans. We are hoping to get a set of plans, go out to bid and present to Council possibly in May. We are looking for a lot of this construction to take place in August. We are possibly looking at closing the Civic Center for a month because with all these projects I am going to talk about, it's going to take a good part, most of the facility is going to be under construction.

So, we have the Civic Center hardwood floors, we are waiting on prices for that; and again this would be done in August. So, between the locker rooms, the hardwood floors and the next thing would be the Elmwood Rec Building floor. That's on the agenda for this year for capital improvements. We are obtaining prices for a gym floor, again present to Council May or June and the installation will be in August or September.

Then the Civic Center track, that's on the agenda to do this year also. That would be to redo the existing 30 year old track that we have down. So, it's going to be a busy year; so that's why we may end up closing the Civic Center for a few weeks to get a lot of this work done.

The last thing I just want to say is that we have been working with Community Services on a survey; and we are happy to say that we finally settled on one, and we have it all detailed out. You guys will be the first ones to actually see this, but it's a two page survey, and this is going out in the month of April. It will be out for a month, and we hope to get some good feedback from the residents between the programs and facilities, how we are doing and get some good things to look at for the future.

That basically wraps up my report for this quarter.

Chairperson Kapusta asked do you have any questions for Tom?

Councilperson Veverka asked where will the splash pad, where are you planning to locate it?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said it's going to be close to the entrance of the outdoor pool. It would be where the 3 medium size pear trees are. It's basically where the walkway is going to the pool now. If you are ever around Dale, I can show you. We have it mapped out there, and you can take a look at it. We feel that it would be the best place for it. It's close to the pool. We can open that area up the way we have it designed conceptually in our minds. It can be open when the pool is not open, but still it would be fenced off. So, it would have 2 sets of gate, the 1 set would be to the outside, and the other set would be to the inside of the pool. So, when the pool was in operation, the outside gate would be closed so you would have to go get into it, get access to it through the pool. During the month of May when the pool is not open, you could access through the outside, but not with the gate to the main pool. The way we have it laid out, the way we have it visualized, we think it's the best way to go.

Councilperson Veverka asked and as a follow up, during the month before the pool is open, is that something that runs all the time, or is it on a timer?

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Recreation Director Walchanowicz said it is on a timer Dale. It also will have a button, it will run a certain amount of time. The main timer will allow it to run from like let's say 11:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m.; but it won't be running the whole entire time unless somebody pushes a button to activate it. It is also going to have a motion sensor so it senses no motion out there; it will then shut itself off.

Councilperson Veverka asked does somebody keep an eye on it then during the time, like in May, is there somebody around?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said that's the nice thing about a splash pad, it doesn't require a lifeguard out there. So, no there is no lifeguard out there; we will monitor it ourselves every once in a while we will have our staff that's in the park, we will check on it. Basically, no, if you go to Broadview Heights or Parma, they are basically self-sufficient.

Councilperson Veverka replied thank you.

Chairperson Kapusta said Tom I have one question too, you talked about the possibility of closing the Civic Center, and as I looked at some of your slides it was talking about installs in August, would I be correct in assuming then that maybe the August/September timeframe was when you might be doing that?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said yes, we would like to get that project done in August. We would like to close it in August and try and get it open for September when the kids are back in school.

Chairperson Kapusta asked do you believe that it would be like earlier in the summer that you would begin just kind of making residents aware of this?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said yes, correct. We will make sure we start telling everyone, informing everyone. We will probably extend the passes another month, we will give them another month on their current membership also.

Chairperson Kapusta said that sounds good.

Councilperson Veverka said I have a question. I am going to loop back to the Kiwanis Pavilion in that the alumni brunch is typically scheduled there. At this point, what is the capacity? I realize hopefully that will change in the summer, but what's the capacity now?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz asked do you remember what we came up with Eric by chance?

Eric Sarley said for the reservations that we are doing right now, based on the measurements that we had just for inside, we are going with 60 on each side; so that will be a total of 120. Our current policy is to also basically have all of the doors open, put some of the picnic tables towards the outside so we are spreading out more than we, basically over the actual capacity that we would be at. We are looking for 60 maximum each side, so that would be a 120 total.

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Recreation Director Walchanowicz said thank you.

Councilperson Veverka said thank you.

Chairperson Kapusta asked and how about the other pavilion to follow up with Dale's question about the capacity?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said basically it would be 60.

Chairperson Kapusta said okay.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said that pavilion has half of the amount of tables.

Chairperson Kapusta said I like your motto up here too. Did you develop that with your committee?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said yes, we have had that.

Chairperson Kapusta said that looks nice, I like that. Any other questions of Tom? Great report, thank you so much. Then if we can ask for the Community Services Department.

Amber Veverka with Community Services said so we just going over the quarterly review; we are looking at December, January, February, and we will touch upon some little things this month. Then some upcoming and new programming I will talk about.

Just for our ongoing programs and services, we still have 14 seniors on our daily resident call list; and this season we had 699 residents sign up for snow removal. Our team has been fielding calls to help them with the signing up for Covid-19 vaccines. We are the point group for that, so it's kind of slowed down this week and last week; but we were getting a lot of calls, and we are helping them navigate who to contact and help sign up through either Drug Mart or how to go about going with the VA or anything like that.

We resumed using volunteers for our Meals on Wheels in November of 2020. So, we are still doing that. We have down below a chart with the meals we served. In those 3 months, we did 563 deliveries, and we have steadily about 14 participants every week.

For our senior transportation, of course we do medical and non-medical, so that would include hair appointments, groceries, pharmacy pickup and things of that nature; and we have 73 primary appointments and 13 secondary in those 3 months. We have been getting some assistance from the Recreation Department with some of our transports and deliveries which we have really appreciated.

Our Welcome Wagon Program, as you see below that, it doesn't seem like really high numbers; but that's actually double what we normally get during those months. So, I am not sure if it's more houses sold, or more babies born or if people are just bored enough to read the Spotlight now. Those numbers have doubled there.

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We will move right into adult programming. Here is a chart with just our 55 plus lunches, and we served more meals on Fridays just naturally. I think that might be because a lot of our seniors are still working, and it's easier for them to pick up lunch on Friday. That was the same story when we were in-house. So, we served over 4,000 Tuesday meals, and about 4,200 Friday meals. The largest meal was the New Year's Eve lunch which was 444, that was our cap.

Like we talked about in the last meeting, we did increase the price from \$3.00 to \$5.00 per meal, but we did pull the numbers, and it didn't actually affect participation at all. In fact, participation is up by 18%. So, you see below the 3 month averages, September, October, November, about 324 average and December, January, February 381. So, people are still really enjoying the meal, and we enjoy seeing them every week. It kind of gives us a quick 5 second welfare check.

Councilperson Trakas said just out of curiosity, I know we qualified a new vendor, have you gotten any feedback on the new vendor, the one out of Canton versus the traditional vendor that we were using?

Ms. Veverka said yes we have; so we have used that vendor 6 times this year. We actually used them today. We have received enough negative feedback that we have decided not to continue using that caterer. So, effective today and going forward, we are going to be sticking with Lori's Custom Catering, which we ran by with the Purchasing Coordinator and said that we could do that. Today was the last day we used TJK Concessions.

Councilperson Trakas said thank you.

Chairperson Kapusta asked can you give us an idea Amber what some of the concerns were from the residents, just generally I mean?

Ms. Veverka said I would say the majority of the concerns were just that they didn't like the food, and like today for instance, the complaints we got were the quantity of food was not really what the caterer is providing. They are not giving as much food with the one caterer.

Chairperson Kapusta said thank you.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said Kathleen I have heard several complaints about this current caterer.

Chairperson Kapusta said I think it was good we took a chance and looked at somebody else, that's the only way you will know if we are doing the best by our residents, so that was good.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said absolutely.

Ms. Veverka said Lori Rizzardi did say, she said that she really enjoyed working with that company, and they were, every other aspect of them was really great. He was a great guy, but due to the amount of complaints from seniors, we decided to go a different direction.

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This isn't on the slide, but in addition to the meals, we have been offering the small group in-house senior programs. So, we are still doing a weekly movie. We have a weekly exercise group which is a Matter of Balance and a monthly Mind Matters class. All of our programs are at maximum capacity with wait lists. We cannot, according to the Board of Health, we cannot have more than 10 people in those adult classes. So, we are just trying to serve as many people as we can; but we are kind of limited there.

Chairperson Kapusta said Amber could I ask, I understand the number that can come to that class, do we have either staff and/or space to perhaps do a second session at an alternate time, I mean simultaneously to these going on or is that not feasible with your staffing and space?

Ms. Veverka said we have brought that up, possibly maybe doing for the movie, like showing the movie twice in a day for instance. So, we don't know if we have enough people on the wait list to really warrant a second session, but there are some movies where we do have 10 people on the wait list. So, we could always add a matinee. We could just kind of do it on a weekly basis, but I have been talking with Lori about how could we possibly expand these sessions because we really want to make sure everybody gets a chance at these classes. So, we have definitely thought about that, and we are looking into it.

Chairperson Kapusta said that's good. That's why I was asking because I know that I have heard from residents who participated in those particular programs in the past, Mind Matters, the Balance and so forth how valuable they were; and I thought if we had a way that we could extend that safely to additional population, that would be great. Thanks.

Ms. Veverka said moving on to some youth programs. These are the youth programs that we offer at the Civic Center. So, we had some pre-school play times, and that's just basically we set up some equipment in the White Oak rooms, and the kids just kind of run around and burn off some energy. It gets them out of the house for an hour, and we have our craft classes. We have game night. We brought back Junior Chef, these are all small class sizes, but we offer several during the week so that everybody who wants to take it can. Claudia has been really doing a great job, and not only is she doing her regular youth programming stuff; but she is also, without her assistant for quite a while now, then she's also helping where Gordon used to do the posters, she is collaborating with the Rec Department. So, she really is doing a fantastic job, and I am just really impressed that she was able to do these classes with everything else that's going on.

So, it's also worth mentioning, since starting these programs in addition to the childcare programs we offer, we haven't had a single case of Covid reported stemming from our programs. We are really diligent about the temp checks and our distance and having the kids wash their hands; and the staff has been really diligent about the rules.

Chairperson Kapusta said great.

Ms. Veverka said the childcare programs, that would be our before school, after school, school holiday specials, we didn't have our December camp like we normally do; but we picked back up in January with the school holiday specials. We are able to accommodate up to 25 kids due to spacing and staffing. Our programs continue to grow, and I consistently have wait lists; but we

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are kind of limited by space and staffing. We are basically following what the schools are following from the County which is for the mask wearing, the hand washing, the social distance. With our groups, with the small groups of 10, we have to have a certain number of staff monitor those groups. We are doing pretty well with that, but we always wish we could help everybody. So, we are hoping that in the fall we can have a little more wiggle room with what we are able to do.

We did a couple of special programs in the last 3 months. We did the Gingerbread House Program. Originally we had planned for that to be in the building, but we had decided that it was safer to let people pick up their kits and take them home. In doing that, we were actually able to accommodate more people. So, we had 40 kits sold. We estimate about 100 people participated, and we also had a contest this year which we don't normally do. We had about half of that group enter the contest. We had a couple of baking kits as prizes for the kids. So, they really enjoyed that, and I think that it kind of got the community engaged because we asked them to go on Facebook and vote for their favorite which they really enjoyed doing.

Then in that same vein, in January we did a snowman contest. It was the same thing, they just entered online. They sent us an email, and then people voted on Facebook. So, these were the top 3, and we gave them prizes like indoor s'more making kits and sledding things and snow globe makers and all kind of fun stuff like that. These are kind of fun things to do in the winter when people were stuck at home and needed something to make them smile.

Chairperson Kapusta said it looks like the prize winner Number 2 thought ahead in the event that you run this contest again, their snowman might last.

Ms. Veverka said we actually had 3 of our entries were wood cutouts which was kind of cool because we told them to be creative.

Chairperson Kapusta said oh absolutely.

Ms. Veverka said we had a good variety.

Then we did a couple of modified programs. The Remembrance we did as a pickup, and so we did that at the normal day. We still had 58 people participate. We gave them their angel ornament with the tag with their loved one and a poem that they could read at home. It wasn't the same as normal, but we thought it would be nice to do something just because people at that time at Christmas they need to remember their loved ones.

We offered 2 take and make crafts, so people could come into the Civic Center, reserve their craft; and then they would trade us a canned good or donation for the food pantry. We are collecting for the food pantry, and we are continually collecting for them. So, I would say, how often do you think that bin fills up? I am always seeing it, probably every week or so it's full.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz agreed.

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Ms. Veverka said so people are still donating. There is still a need there. So, we kind of already had the kits on hand for Holiday Fest; so we thought why not give people something to do at home.

We also did coloring pages for Valentine's Day, and things of that nature. We did a pre-school holiday special, the Polar Express. We had Santa come in, and Eric helped us out; and we had Santa read the Polar Express and the Night Before Christmas. Then after the program, we put them online for anybody to watch on the City's YouTube page.

Chairperson Kapusta said Amber I have a question if I could about the food pantry. Do we designate one particular pantry that it goes to? Do we rotate? Where do we decide where that food goes?

Ms. Veverka said currently the food is going to St. Michael's food pantry. I know in the past we had given donations to Lend-A-Hand. I am sure there are others, but since the pandemic started, it's been going straight to St. Michael's.

Chairperson Kapusta said okay, that's good. Let me ask this then, do we make sure that we know that the other parishes, other churches in our community are aware that the pantry exists? I would imagine some of them are, but do we make an outreach to make sure they are aware so that any church could utilize that for their parishioners who are in our community.

Ms. Veverka said I could definitely send something out. I did talk to the Presbyterian Church because they used to have a food bank; so they knew about St. Michael's. They have been sending anybody who comes in to St. Michael's. I will make sure that the other churches are aware.

Chairperson Kapusta said I was glad to hear that you said that we are collecting what sounds like better volumes of food; do we keep, and I realize we have lesser number of folks coming into our center right now, but do we keep a bin or something there on an ongoing basis or is just when you are having an event that we put that out?

Ms. Veverka said no, the bin is out. It's right by the entrance, and like I said, that thing fills up probably every week. So, anybody who comes into the Civic Center or comes in to work out can drop off just continually any time.

Chairperson Kapusta said well I applaud you for that. I have a friend who happens to work at another food program and was indicating that the volume has just gone up astronomically of those in need; so I think the fact that you guys are making such a continual overture to collect and make it visible is a great thing. I would strongly encourage you to continue to do that at all the programs. I think we want to be known as a giving community, and this is an easy way to meet a very significant need, so thank you.

Ms. Veverka said definitely. When I talked to our contact at St. Michael's, he said he has never seen so many people in need to use the food bank; and they are very appreciative of our

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partnership. We are just going to keep going as long as they need it. We can keep that up as long as they need donations.

Chairperson Kapusta said sometimes when we have had the events, and if I have helped and volunteer, people will come in the door, and they will go I forgot my food, which I believe is legitimate, don't get me wrong; but I think with us keeping the bins there, keeping the visibility when we send things out or put on our flyers to actually put that in print, I think it's going to become more routine. That's what I would truly like to see.

Ms. Veverka said definitely, and we even get people who come into the drive-in lunch; and they will say when you put my lunch in the trunk, grab the bag of food in there. So, sometimes we even collect when they do the drive-thru lunch.

Chairperson Kapusta said that's great.

Ms. Veverka said just on to a couple of program revivals and changes. So, these are the programs we brought back since December 2020; so like I mentioned the Better Balance, the Junior Chef, Mind Matters and yoga and then this year we are going to bring back the adult cooking class. We are going to be partnering with Vista Springs, their Executive Chef for those, Fall Fest, Memorial Day Service and the Parade. We did have a modified service last year, but our department did not do that service; we will be back to normal hopefully this year.

The Safe Boating Course, we are going to try to do a virtual Safe Boating Course for the community, and that will be coming up next month.

Summer playgrounds, last year we were only able to do summer camp, so we are going to be doing both camp and playgrounds; and then I have been getting more requests for the tot room to be re-opened. We have been looking into that for several months, and I thought maybe this would be a good time to kind of revisit the tot room prices. We don't have to go over anything necessarily, but back in 2016 we brought up taking the price out of the ordinance. Other communities charge maybe \$2.00 or \$3.00, even the members, to use the tot room. I don't know where it went after that meeting. In that meeting it was decided that the Director at that time was to reach out to Greg O'Brien to try to see if we could pull that; and I don't know where it ended up. So, I sent that information back to the Mayor's office at the beginning of the month. If we are going to make a change, this wouldn't be a terrible time to do it before we re-open again. I just wanted to kind of put that out there and have people thinking about that.

Chairperson Kapusta asked and the current charge Amber is?

Ms. Veverka said \$1.00 per hour, per child.

Chairperson Kapusta asked and you are talking about a change, is it a change to the cost or what do you need?

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Ms. Veverka said the change that we proposed originally was to not have any prices for activities in ordinance so that they could fluctuate as necessary, whether that be to go up or just to pull it, either way. That is what we are looking at.

Chairperson Kapusta replied okay.

Ms. Veverka said and then new starting April 1<sup>st</sup>, we are changing our caterer for Meals on Wheels. We are going to be partnering with Vista Springs Ravinia; and they actually are going to be delivering as well. One of the nice perks about that is that the price does not go up for our residents; and in addition, they get a monthly menu which wasn't available before. We are kind of hopeful that this will be a better situation. Our volunteers are a little bummed of course because they really love seeing our seniors; but there are other capacities where we can use those volunteers to help us out. So, we are really looking forward to this partnership.

Chairperson Kapusta said I have a question about that. So, you said no price increase, and now Vista Springs will do that delivery, is that correct?

Ms. Veverka replied correct.

Chairperson Kapusta said I think it's a win-win obviously because I think it's a good position for Vista Springs to be put in versus a community partner; but secondly, with the potential that as our residents might get some of those meals, and then if some of those residents might need to think about where they want to go for their next living arrangement if they have to leave their private homes, that is a big win. I know for a fact that a considerable amount of time a senior will want to know what is the food like there, what's it going to be like; and then if they have this, that's a good thing.

This is just in my mind, my thinking, but maybe down the line if you ever have occasion to talk with Vista Springs again, a couple of communities that I have been aware of in the past have actually opened up their facility, such as a Vista Springs, dining room to community residents, seniors, and on a reservation basis, and at a cost the facility determines; so it's not a loss for them, but this has been very beneficial too. Again, visibility, people getting their eyes into that facility, seeing it, could be potential business for the assisted living facility; secondly, it has been helpful for some of the seniors who are considering if they want to make this move. They are perhaps not as anxious about thinking about going particularly some place that maybe for the last 3 months, 6 months they have had a meal at periodically; so that's another thing. Then the third factor I believe is healthy, nutritious meals. I have most often seen this taken advantage of to be honest with you by males who were the sole survivor in the spousal unit; and it just became a way. They weren't comfortable with cooking, didn't want to, whatever; so I think there could be a win on a number of avenues there. I would be real interested if you ever have the chance to talk to them to see what kind of response that we might get from them. There may be some real barriers on their end as to why they couldn't or wouldn't want to do it, but I think it would be worth proposing at least.

Ms. Veverka said I do know that Vista Springs is offering, I think they are doing it on a monthly basis, they are offering a meal on Wednesday. I believe it's free to 55 plus, and some people are

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taking advantage of that. They made a reservation there. So, that's nice that they are getting people in the door, but also they have a nutritionist on staff; so you know that the meal is going to be healthy, or at least nutritious.

Chairperson Kapusta said Chris did you have a question?

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I had a question for Amber. If you could just kind of talk about the summer playground program for a couple of minutes. Since we didn't have it last year, and obviously I have a 6 year old that would want to go into that. What are some of our protocols going to be? Is it going to be at the Civic Center? Is it going to be at the Fieldhouse? Can you kind of touch base on some of that stuff for me?

Ms. Veverka said I just have a little bit of information because Claudia is still working with the Administration just trying to establish what exactly we are doing. As far as I know, it will be at the Civic Center. We may have to utilize all of the rooms just to get the spacing in place. Currently, there has to be some kind of barrier or something between groups which is what we are using at the after school program. Then also the capacity would be limited. We looked at 2 different models, one was a 6 week program; and the other was 2 programs that would be 3 weeks. We were looking at the 2 programs that would be 3 week programs because we were hoping to serve as many residents as possible which we could do if we broke it up; but I am not 100% sure on the model they are going with. We are still in the planning stages right now.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said so most likely we are going to cut down the amount of kids we could take for that program because I know before wasn't it close to 100 or maybe a little over.

Ms. Veverka said the maximum at the last time we did it was 136. Currently, we could do 60 or we could do 2 sessions of 60; we are still figuring that out with the room and staffing and all of those other things that we have to consider this year.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked so if we do it that route, and we hold it down to 60; I know years in the past when I was signing my other daughter up, it was basically first-come-first-serve. If we are going to cut it drastically like that, how would you guys go about signing residents up for those programs? I know you may not know yet, but I have people asking as well; so I am just trying to get as much information as I can.

Ms. Veverka said we don't have the sign up information ironed out. As it goes for summer camp for instance, summer camp always sells out even in a regular year; and it's always on a first-come-first-serve basis. Whether or not we still stick with that route is yet to be determined.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said thank you.

Councilperson Veverka asked Amber didn't Vista Springs also do some kind of a soup program for a number of weeks?

Ms. Veverka asked a what kind of a program?

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Councilperson Veverka asked didn't they have some, didn't they provide soup for a 6 week period?

Ms. Veverka said I'm not sure about that. I just know about the one lunch program.

Then we just have one more slide.

Councilperson Trakas asked who are we displacing for the Meals on Wheels Program, what is the name of the vendor we currently use?

Ms. Veverka said it's Coyne Catering.

Councilperson Trakas said they used to do our church.

Ms. Veverka said we have had a number of caterers over the years, and we have been working with them probably 4 or 5 years. We have had a number of different places we worked with including nursing homes and different things. This should be a good change.

Councilperson Trakas said I hope so.

Ms. Veverka said one last slide, we are trying a couple of new things this year; one is our citywide garage sale. A lot of different communities do this. There's Cuyahoga Heights, Broadview Heights, Seven Hills, Valley View, Brooklyn Heights, they all do a citywide garage sale; so I thought why not us. We are going to try this out. It takes very minimal staffing. It's really self-sufficient. They just basically, anybody in Independence can have their garage sale if they choose this weekend. I talked to Mike Gero at Building, and he said he would waive the permits for that weekend; and it's just kind of a nice thing, both for sellers and for vendors because they get more shoppers because there is a draw of more sales. They get to clean out their houses, and then they kind of get to have some fun with their neighbors. So, we are going to try that out, and it will be in June.

We are also hoping to kind of branch off from Holiday Fest; we always have a small craft fair in Holiday Fest. Since we are talking about modifying events and such, this would be a good year to split off and do a craft and vendor fair on its own, separate weekend. I did check with Kiwanis, and they are not having their garage sale this year; so this would be a nice thing to kind of put into place. I know there are a lot of people in Independence who have side businesses, homemade crafts, small businesses from home; so this would be a nice way for them to come out get some sales for their businesses.

Just something to try out, we are trying to reach more people online and just kind of have some activities people can do at home; so since we didn't have Irish Fest, we just did something called a Virtual Pet Parade. So, people sent their photos in for St. Patrick's Day; and we had that available for people to see online. I know it's not the same, but like I said, we are just trying to get people engaged in a safe way.

Chairperson Kapusta said looks good, some great ideas.

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Councilperson Walchanowicz said I don't know if it will be for Tom or for Amber, but I have had several families inquire about having a movie in the park more frequently in the summertime with potential like food trucks. Is there any possibility for that or any talks for that?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said I could probably answer that. We are planning additional movies and have food trucks along with the movies; so yes, you will see more this coming summer.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said thanks.

Councilperson Trakas said just one observation. I participated in, Hinckley used to have a community garage sale, and it was really effective; so Amber congratulations, I think that's a good idea. The Hinckley Police were very engaged; so just make sure the Chief gives guidance along those lines because sometimes there are people who want to get bargains, and there are some (inaudible) individuals out there checking out people's homes. Let's just make sure we have a pretty strong risk assessment from the Police as to what the proper procedures may want to be.

Ms. Veverka said that's some good advice, and I did call every community before we decided to do this. I talked to their point person, and my first question to them was do you have any issues that you need to involve your Police Department in; and they said never. Even though they said they never had traffic issues and never had issues with property or anything like that. That being said though, I am going to make sure that they are aware of what is going on; and maybe they can kind of do a little more buzzing through town just to make sure there's nobody poking around who is not supposed to be snooping. I am really looking forward to this too because it gets people into the community for shopping of course; but also I have talked to so many people who have just said during this pandemic, they have been cleaning like crazy. They are going through garages and attics and everything. It should be a win-win. They can declutter, and they can kind of do something fun.

Councilperson Trakas said it's an extremely good idea. I just remember when Dr. Koludrovich had an art exhibit. He was my neighbor on Dalebrook, and he got hit for \$100,000 worth of stolen merchandise the next day because someone was casing the house. You have to be careful.

Ms. Veverka said yes, definitely.

Councilperson Trakas said in 1971 \$100,000 was a lot of money.

Chairperson Kapusta said Amber, I just had another thought as we were going through this. Might we consider or give some thought to, I believe when the Kiwanis do theirs that at the end of it, they have some like distribution or whatever, what is left, if you want to give it away and not take it back home with you, there was a potential to do that. I am wondering if there is an organization or group that we might be able to partner with who, I don't know how we would logistically work this out, so let me think out loud. Maybe if in advance when you register, you indicated that if I have any good left overs, I would like to be contacted. I am just making that up; and then this group would at that point and time, I don't mean like 12 days later, I mean at

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that point and time, they would have to have folks available to either come out and get the things or we could have a central place where we could take our stuff. Do you see what I am saying? Your point is well taken, we clear it out, we put it on our driveway for this garage sale, and a third of it doesn't go. Sometimes it's throwing it out, and maybe there's stuff there that could benefit other people. I can only speak to my parish, St. Michael's I know, works with an organization. I believe it's called like I Am Ministry. It used to be housed on Granger Road in the building in Independence, and now I believe our pastor said it's at St. Therese further down around Jennings. That's just one organization that I know takes home goods, things of this nature. Is that something we can maybe look into?

Ms. Veverka said yes, all of the communities I talked to, they arrange for a charity to come around to anyone who extra; so at the time they sign up, they will check off if they want a charity to come by and pick up their goods the following week. There was one community who had their Service Department pick everything up, but I think Easter Seals or Veterans of America, one of those groups. I haven't quite decided which group yet, but there will be an option to have that picked up afterwards.

Chairperson Kapusta said can I also make another suggestion, I am glad to hear that. May I suggest to you that perhaps you contact the clergy in our community from our churches and see who they may have some connection with already because my point being they are probably connected not only with us giving to these groups, but maybe some of our residents receiving from these groups. So, I don't think that can hurt us, and you can still vet them and see which one you felt, or which more than one you might feel is worth working with; but that may be a good starting point.

Ms. Veverka said that's a good idea.

Chairperson Kapusta said I have a question. You made a comment to another subject a little bit earlier when you were giving us your statistics Amber on the transportation, you mentioned that the Rec Department is assisting you at some points in time. I didn't see numbers of volume that would necessitated that, is it a staffing issue that necessitated that?

Ms. Veverka said no, our main driver was out ill for several weeks.

Chairperson Kapusta asked so it was staffing, it was based on personnel, you needed to borrow personnel because you didn't have it?

Ms. Veverka said yes, I didn't clarify that.

Chairperson Kapusta said that's okay, I was wondering about that. It's going to lead me into my next question, and it's kind of staffing related as well. I heard you make reference when you were talking about the youth programs that the assistant position there, I don't know if it was full or part-time, but I assume that remains vacant from the comments that you made. I know I have had several Councilpersons have engaged in this discussion, as well as a few residents related to the social worker position not being refilled. This is maybe my own ignorance, I don't know if you have been brought on as Director, or there was a change in your title or if that position is just

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going to be as it is now. I think that's something that would be helpful for us as Council if you have some more information about.

Ms. Veverka said yes, I agree. We are actually, we had reviewed the job description for the social worker back in January. I had been going back and forth with the Human Resources Department; and I keep following up, but no movement has been made to post the job for the social worker position. I am still waiting on that.

I have no information about the Director of the Department yet. I am currently still in my position as the Office Coordinator, and the Youth Programmer position was previously held by Marcia Abbidini. That was a 28 hour a week job. She took Mary Walsh's position at the Fieldhouse full-time, and the job was not replaced.

Chairperson Kapusta said I don't know, but can I hear from any of the other Councilpersons, do you have any thoughts on this?

Councilperson Trakas said I would just say, when we talked to Mayor Kurtz about the social worker position at the last meeting, I think he indicated that he was going to try to advertise here in the first quarter; so I think we still have a few more, maybe another month here left in the first quarter. I think it is certainly the will of the committee and of Council that the position be filled. So, maybe just another conversation with the Mayor about that because it was back in November or December that he did indicate that he heard us loud and clear on that, and that was going to be something he would try to get done in the first quarter. So, we are still in the first quarter, and let's hope we can get that advertised here in the next 37 days.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked we haven't had a social worker for what, about roughly 18 months, or has it been longer?

Ms. Veverka said it's been closer to 18 months than 12 months, I can tell you that.

Chairperson Kapusta said I know that Jenny left, I was thinking July because it was the summertime; so probably a year and a half.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I have not heard anything about a Director yet from any of my conversations.

Chairperson Kapusta said and just to clarify Jim, I think the quarter ends in a few days.

Councilperson Trakas said oh, I was thinking of semesters I think.

Chairperson Kapusta said you are school oriented there.

Even the Youth Programmer Assistant, it looks like you are doing some great programs, and there is need there because we had to separate some things out and reduce our sizes and so forth; we can't perhaps always meet the need with our existing staff. I would support looking at getting that replaced too because I think it's important, and obviously have a soft spot in my

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heart for Community Services and always will. I believe that we have the heart of our community coming out of these 2 departments that have presented to us today, both our Rec Department and our Community Services Department. While I know we are not responsible, it's an Administrative decision with staffing, I respect that totally; but I think that us supporting that and recognizing the need that your departments have for that.

The coordination that you show between your departments again with even Rec Department helping out with your driving when your personnel was low; that's beautiful, that's a great thing. I think that says a lot about the 2 of you functioning in your capacity and your staffs. I would applaud you for that and encourage you to continue that. Just know that I think I speak for several of us here sitting today that we support you in those efforts and in your efforts to try to get your manpower up to where perhaps you feel it's needed to.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I don't want to see our current staffing run into the ground trying to do all of this by themselves. We are rolling into a very busy time of the year for us, so we are hoping help is on the way.

Ms. Veverka said definitely. Burnout is always on our radar, so we are trying to keep up with everything; but it is going to pick up. Like I said, because we want to serve as many community members as possible, especially through our youth programs; if we had more staff, we could offer more classes being that we are limited with size. We could do so much more. I keep checking in to see if there are any updates on the staffing, but nothing to report to you today unfortunately.

Chairperson Kapusta said thank you very much Amber.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said Kathleen maybe we should bring this up with the Mayor.

Chairperson Kapusta said I'm thinking if there seems that there is some momentum amongst the majority of us on Council, I think that we can help support our Directors in this area.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I agree.

Chairperson Kapusta asked any further business?

Councilperson Trakas said I just have a comment. Everybody that we have in our City does a terrific job, but boy Amber and Tom, I can't thank you enough for the work you are doing. You are innovating, you are constantly coming up with new ideas. It's really impressive. Both of you have really done a terrific job. I am really, really happy to have you working for the citizens of our community, and I learn something every day because I don't get up there very frequently. Now that I have my vaccine, I guess maybe I could be a little bit more out and about. Truly impressive, both of you; you have really handled adversity particularly well. You have come up with some really innovative plans and ideas, and I know that the residents really, really appreciate them. Just to both of you, thank you for all that you are doing for our community. It can be under-appreciated at times and just wanted to relate to you that we always get good

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feedback from the both of you, but particularly during this pandemic. When the time to shine was here, you both have really shone, so thank you.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz and Amber Veverka said thank you very much.

Chairperson Kapusta asked any other business before this committee? Thank you both, and your staffs for presenting today. Can I have a motion to adjourn?

**Moved by Walchanowicz, seconded by Trakas, to adjourn the Community Services Committee Meeting of March 23, 2021. Voice Vote: 3 yes/0 no; motion carried.**

There being no further business to discuss, the Community Services Committee Meeting was adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

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Debra J. Beal, Clerk of Council  
Minutes Unapproved at Time of Release 03/24/21

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