

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE
COUNCIL WORKSHOP MINUTES
APRIL 4, 2023, AT 3:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CAUCUS ROOM & VIA ZOOM**

Vice Mayor Dave Grendel called the Council Workshop to order at 3:02 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, Fire Chief Steve Rega, Engineering/Building employee Jim Riley, and Deputy Clerk of Council Amanda Sharrer.

Vice Mayor Grendel said the first part of our workshop is going to be a tour of the Independence Police Department.

Mayor Kurtz asked does anyone need a small map to take on the tour, or do you just want to understand the different operational concerns because we have the larger ones when we come back. Do you just want to go and take a tour? Then we will come back here and go create some more discussion.

Several people replied good.

Councilperson Veverka said thank you Mayor, you obviously got my message.

Council then left to tour the Police Department.

The Council Workshop resumed at 3:48 p.m.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we finished the first item on our Revised Agenda, which was the tour of the Police Department. It was very informative. It was also eye-opening. So, hopefully, I know Dale asked and maybe Council can have a list so we can discuss some of the shortcomings and everything.

Mayor Kurtz said we want that list from the Chief. The Mayor asked if anyone wanted a footprint.

Councilperson Veverka asked can we tell because I just had a chance to glance at this one; do we know which walls are block walls and which ones are frame?

Mayor Kurtz said the plan would show us.

Councilperson Veverka said I just want to make sure.

Several people began speaking at once.

Mayor Kurtz asked are we ready for wayfinding? If she's not here, we can go to the cemetery item.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we will move on to Item 3 on the agenda which is the Maple Shade Cemetery, and Annie would you like to begin.

City Planner Lynch said so, this is just an informal schedule and timeline to go over everything. Our units have been ordered. We have been working with Engineering to come up with a final site design and layout, and the site so far it has been, there was a slight (inaudible) on the island; so that has been cleared and leveled, and ready for whenever we are ready to start that.

Councilperson Togliatti asked did we do that in-house?

City Planner Lynch said that was done in-house. The units are anticipated to be delivered late April, and so then once those are ready to be brought here, we will schedule an installation and get the cranes and all of that, so they are set. We will plan working with Engineering and Service to get the footers and the concrete poured so that those are all set when they are ready to be placed.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked are we going to get a copy of this?

City Planner Lynch said yes, I can send this out, sure.

Councilperson Togliatti asked, and we are going to do the foundation in-house as well?

Economic Development Director Hyser said I believe with the specialty of the work we are going to have an outside firm do the concrete. So, Engineering has recommended that an outside firm do that and the stamping.

City Planner Lynch said so, with Engineering we came up with this final site design, and so the dark gray is going to be concrete pads. It will be stamped concrete, and then obviously the footers for each unit. Then, we will add some landscaping. This is what we are anticipating the final design is going to be.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked so, we are going to have six different units?

City Planner Lynch said so, we are going to have six. They are going to be broken down into phases. So, the white, or the lighter gray ones here, are going to be the first three that we are going to put in; but it is recommended that all of the footers be poured at the same time. That way, you don't want to go back in when there's already a huge piece of granite to try to pour another footer and work around the space.

Councilperson Trakas asked do we have any little seats that people can sit down on?

City Planner Lynch said so since we are not into Phase 2, we are going to use these areas where the footers are to kind of put some planters and benches. Then, we will reconfigure that once all six are in there, how that will work with the site. Given these large concrete pads, we will have plenty of room to add our benches and other landscaping.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked so, when is the plan to have this all in place by July?

City Planner Lynch said I would hope by Memorial Day, that was our initial goal. The concrete should be done prior to those being set. So, really, I think Memorial Day was what we were aiming for.

Councilperson Trakas asked how long do you have to let the concrete set before you can put the columbarium on?

Economic Development Director Hyser said I don't know what the cure time is on that.

Councilperson Trakas said just like my father, I am always for long cure times because when you do it too quickly, a couple of years later you find out.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked when will a person be able to use it?

Councilperson Trakas asked so, around Memorial Day you can theoretically have a burial afterwards?

City Planner Lynch said I would presume, yes.

Vice Mayor Grendel said Chris, we will probably have to decide pricing.

City Planner Lynch said I kind of, as part of this, came up with some preliminary pricing, like my recommendation. So, how I came to this; I found a lot of the surrounding communities, their information on what they charged was readily available on their websites. Also, we got some information from our consultant that we were working with, and so basically, we took the average of the communities and kind of came up with per niche \$825, opening and closing \$275. This would be your total if that was the route you decided to go. Then we also looked at changing the price of our traditional burials. So, you can see that. Just so you know, this was the price per niche based on our budget and how many units we actually have.

Vice Mayor Grendel said it was a little more expensive for the traditional.

Mayor Kurtz said the traditional cost is our traditional cost.

City Planner Lynch said right now I think it's \$450.

Mayor Kurtz agreed.

City Planner Lynch said but then again, we did look at all these communities and kind of felt that these numbers were in line.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked so what's our cost though? What's the bottom-line cost?

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Narduzzi said that's what it's going to cost us to bury somebody.

Councilperson Togliatti asked does that include the cost of concrete and all the improvements?

City Planner Lynch said that is just the cost of the columbarium.

Economic Development Director Hyser said well, it does include the concrete.

Mayor Kurtz said that's the estimate, the \$175,000 estimate.

Councilperson Trakas asked so, what does it actually cost us to bury someone now in the ground, do you know?

Mayor Kurtz said the grave is \$450.

Councilperson Trakas said I know, but what does it actually cost us?

Mayor Kurtz said like a weekend, is it Saturday? There's a variable, but it's a good deal.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said we wanted to share our review, the information we put together so that we can determine an overall strategy for new costs and reflect that in an ordinance form so that going forward people will know what the cost is, depending on the type of burial they want.

Councilperson Trakas said while we are going through this, do we have any like a perpetual care cost or anything like that? Once they (inaudible), that's it.

Mayor Kurtz said when you say what's our cost, every year we spend. There is no business logic to it, but it's a reflection of the City, it's a reflection of who we are, how we respect and manage the grounds. That's just part of doing business with the City of Independence.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked how many burials can we have in the six columbarium's?

City Planner Lynch said for the three it's 288. The first phase will be 288 slots. So, each one of those.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said they charge for opening and closing, can that happen more than once?

Councilperson Trakas said if there's a double deep.

City Planner Lynch said we could put two urns in one spot.

Councilperson Veverka said on the regular sites they can't do double deep, so we were told.

Councilperson Trakas said we do.

Mayor Kurtz said they do double deep.

Councilperson Veverka said that's not what we were told.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked how many spots do we have now as far as the traditional?

Mayor Kurtz said 40 to 50 left, but we are planning the preparation for the next phase, then we will have more than in our lifetime. The first phase would be on Brecksville Road.

Councilperson Trakas said and if we do that expansion, I think we should also put some pricing together for like private family burial.

Mayor Kurtz said imagine if somebody wanted, they owned three or four plots, and they wanted to put in a mausoleum or something.

Councilperson Trakas said a mausoleum at Lakeview is \$250,000. I inquired for my mom and dad, and they didn't get one.

Mayor Kurtz said it definitely gives you a perspective.

Councilperson Trakas said I think we should at least offer that as an opportunity.

Mayor Kurtz said absolutely because we are going to have several phases. That's a good idea. We will look at that.

We also have been looking, Annie has been looking at a mausoleum, just beyond where the columbarium wall would be, and the design would be to, the way they are dealing with more funerals today instead of just burying them in the tents, and then in the bad weather or even if it's just raining, they will do something inside. They will do their service inside, and then, based on the weather, they will go out and do the burial. Or I was at one recently where the weather was inclement, and they put us all into a mausoleum. Then they did the service, and then they took the body, and they went to the site where they buried the body. So, the people were congregating inside that area under the roof. We are doing some sketching just to get a flavor of size, and we will bring that back; but the more time-sensitive issue is we wanted to introduce the burial costs

that we put together so that Council would have an understanding. Then they could help direct or agree to a price for each of the opportunities or variable ways that would be managed by the City in this new phase, plus the columbarium wall.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked well, Mayor do you think by the June meeting we should have an ordinance as far as the pricing goes and everything?

Mayor Kurtz said that could be at a Council Workshop as a whole, it doesn't matter. We can see if we can get an agreement on a price. We put together a framework to have a discussion. What Council wants to do from that, absolutely. Annie just worked hard to put it all together. We just wanted to give you some framework of what potentially we could look at.

Vice Mayor Grendel said sometime in the near future if Council could get a copy of your sheets there, that would be great.

Mayor Kurtz said we will do that this week.

Councilperson Trakas said it looked like that low maintenance, made out of a stone, the one we were talking about doing small columbarium's, maybe that could be a place for people to gather. You can turn that into a chapel or something.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked how many graves are bought but not used yet?

City Planner Lynch said good question.

Councilperson Narduzzi said if they are going to be cremated, you might want to persuade them to a different area, and then that opens up those graves and saves us time on doing a new one.

Vice Mayor Grendel said that almost looks the same.

City Planner Lynch said I do have some information from Service of like the unoccupied graves, but it's something I can kind of dive into.

This is also just another reference of pricing. The Cleveland Memorial Society every year puts together a general price list of what it is for whether it's cremation, immediate burial or the whole funeral services, things like that. Again, just for reference to kind of see what's going on in our neighboring communities, and then this is again just a very brief sort of overview taking the low-end cost, adding in what you would pay per niche, the opening and closing, average cost of an urn or a casket and basically what the total would be. It's just to kind of give an idea what somebody would be looking to pay. A lot of that is going to come down to personal choice, but we just wanted to show you.

Then for the engraving of the doors of each niche, we ideally would like to keep it very uniform where all the names would be using the same font, same style. That way it wouldn't be getting cluttered with different wants of people. So, keeping a very uniform look to those.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked, and what material is that? Is it granite?

City Planner Lynch replied yes.

Several people began speaking at once again.

City Planner Lynch said it would black granite just etched.

Councilperson Trakas asked what about for veterans? Would they have the veteran plaques? Is there a space for those?

Mayor Kurtz said they could put something somewhere attached.

Councilperson Trakas said or maybe you could have a wall or something that eventually they could put those on. For the incinerations they have those little ones.

City Planner Lynch said, so part of our design around the footer and the unit themselves was to have this little six inches of dirt where you could put a veteran's stake just to kind of identify and memorialize them because people do that with the headstone. They obviously bring their own; so, we wanted to give the opportunity. That was the way we thought was best.

Councilperson Togliatti asked, and would this engraving cost be part of the opening and closing?

City Planner Lynch said we were proposing that the engraving would be part of that \$825, which would be the cost of the niche itself.

Councilperson Trakas said one other question on the policy if we ever thought of animal burials inside the niches. So, sometimes, I remember Ms. Pastor died, she had like 40 dog's downstairs, and Greg Zamborsky had to pull out of there. They were all in urns. So, sometimes they want to bury an animal with their urn, if we have a policy on that. I am not advocating either way, I am just saying we should have a policy.

Councilperson Narduzzi said they had a dog buried at the St. Lawrence cemetery.

Mayor Kurtz said it's something we should look at.

Councilperson Narduzzi said they could put them in the niche with them.

Councilperson Togliatti asked, and the existing asphalt roads in the cemetery, are those slated to be paved this year, resurfaced? I know they are in bad shape.

Mayor Kurtz said I don't know if it makes sense to do them this year. We are going to put a new road in to expand the traditional burials at some point. We would be in a better position, depending if we are going to do a mausoleum. At some point we will redress that, but they are in pretty good shape, especially the one where we put the additional paving on the east side and

widened it. For the wintertime it worked really well, that extra width we added. So, I don't see anything this year because of the other opportunities, but that is something absolutely we should look at in the future. We are talking about a fence, a new road, we are talking about the columbarium walls and rock, a lot of moving parts right now. The priorities, we are on track to put this together. We are on track engineering the road, a new road. That's plenty of flexibility, and then we can look beyond that to a mausoleum, a praying or meditation area, moving the maintenance garage, put it in the back corner away from everything.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked start that new road, it would probably go in next year sometime.

Mayor Kurtz said I would have to ask Don if he has it slated for this fall. We were looking at this fall or next spring.

City Planner Lynch said so, that's all I had for the cemetery.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said Annie if you could just send that with the weekly update, put all the information in there.

City Planner Lynch said sure.

Mayor Kurtz said and then we would appreciate if you could generate any questions and help us frame a direction that we can then vote on in the next couple of months. I would like to have something ready to go and formulized by the time we open up the columbarium's.

Vice Mayor Grendel said the pricing.

Mayor Kurtz said so, we will get this to you, make any suggestions and send it back. We will put it all together, and we will have another discussion. If we come up with something we can reduce it to writing and legislate it.

Vice Mayor Grendel said the work is to be started in the next months, and could you keep us posted?

City Planner Lynch replied absolutely.

Mayor Kurtz said if we get that going, and we want to get the people coming in aware of it that there's going to be this opportunity, but we can't do that until later. The first question they are going to ask is the price.

Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Mayor. Thank you, Annie.

Now we will move to the second item on the agenda, and Jess that is the wayfinding program Phase 1, and we have our guest from Guide Studio here, Cathy Fromet.

Economic Development Director Hyser said we are going to switch out the technology a little bit here.

Mayor Kurtz said several members of Council have approached the City about the safety in front of Dairy King, and so we are talking about some planter boxes with some fences in between, some sections of fence. When those kids congregate there, they can't run out into the street. So, it's just something we are looking at, and hopefully that will satisfy some of the concerns that members of Council had.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked do you want me to talk with the guys from Romito's and see if they would be interested and see if Mike and Mike would want put something towards it?

Mayor Kurtz said we will get a copy of this, and they can play with it then, and come up with an idea. Give Chris a copy of that.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Vice Mayor Grendel said they don't have umbrellas on their tables. There's nothing to protect you if it's raining.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I know last year I think Fedex backed in and hit their awning. It took all summer for the awning company to come back.

Mayor Kurtz said you can't get products. You can't get vehicles.

Councilperson Togliatti asked, and do they have a potential tenant for that building behind Dairy King to the west?

Councilperson Walchanowicz said they sold that. It's the person who owns the dress shop above the bike shop, Something White is what I think it's called. They are moving in there.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Economic Development Director Hyser said as we have had several conversations with Guide Studio the last couple of years. As you guys know, we engaged Cathy and her firm to not only do our wayfinding analysis, she put together some proposals. She also helped us with our branding initiative. The last time we discussed this, we talked about how we were going to roll some of this wayfinding out, and the campus and Rockside would be a priority. So, here we are talking about how we are going to roll that out.

Cathy Fromet said so, I am not going to show the whole overview of the entire sign program. I am going to talk more about what we have discussed that we are going to implement this year. If we need to go back to the whole thing, and you guys want to look at that, we can. Based on the budget exercise, so we did some budget exercises on costs from the initial designs, and we broke those down by different areas of focus; and one of the areas that we talked about was what we

are calling, I don't know if you call it that or not, is we call it the community campus. It just seems like a nice name for this area that we are in right here where you have so many of your City facilities. You have park facilities. It's a place that a lot of people visit, and it was our recommendation that this is an area that we would focus implementing a signage and wayfinding program. Not that you don't have them, you do have signage; but you also have a new brand, and this is actually a discussion we have been having with a lot of cities. Signage is one of the first ways that people are going to interface with your brand, other than going to your website or getting handed a business card or maybe seeing it on uniforms. If they are interfacing with some of your public assets like your parks or any facilities. It's a way they are going to interface with your brand.

This campus, you have a lot of assets here, and you have a lot of amenities that people within the City and those who are visiting the City might interface with. Signage and wayfinding is actually going to help with that.

When we did our analysis, even with the signage out now, there is confusion in terms of where you can go or what are the best ways. So, when we started this, we did an analysis which is called travel paths and decision points. It's just to help us understand where people are making decisions and where information needs to be within your campus.

Then from that we begin identifying the types of signs that we would recommend here, and where they would go. This is part of a programming document, so it probably looks like a giant mess to you guys. It makes sense to us, but this helps us quantify the signs that you need in the area, where they will go and what are the types in the entire program that we recommend.

Councilperson Trakas asked each one of those is a sign?

Ms. Fromet said each one of those is a sign. Considering that there are double sides, it tells us what direction you are going to be seeing this, but for this one, we are recommending that on Brecksville Road there is some type of primary directional for this area. When we were first coming to meet with the City, and we were not as familiar with Independence; and I think we had this discussion with the brand. A lot of people's familiarity with Independence sort of stops at Rockside Road. So, when you come into the community, when we were coming to City Hall, there was no indication on Brecksville Road that this is sort of a major area of your City, and it's a major campus. So, our recommendation there is some type of feature entry element here that's calling out that this is where City Hall is, where some of your parks, that this is, we were calling it your community campus.

Then all of these green signs are either facility sign types. So, there are City facilities here. There are park facilities here. So, all of these sort of have a purpose, and I will show you what that looks like from a design perspective; and then we do also recommend that there is some directional signage within the campus to help direct the people to some of these different pieces.

Part of this, we have been investigating using the colors within the sign program. So, what we are going to show you is pretty neutral with the exception of getting to Rockside Road where I

will talk about that a little bit. We are recommending right now implementing banners on Rockside, that is correct; but we will look at a whole, there is a color-coding system that is going with the sign program for Rockside. We wanted to see how we could begin introducing that through the banner program as well.

So, for the community campus sign program, there are a lot of things that we have been exploring in this area. One of them was potentially this tower feature that I think has been discussed in the City for several years.

Another one is more of a wall feature that is kind of identifying this as your community campus, Either way, we think you need something at that Brecksville entry point just to make sure that people know that there are some things back there. You could tell there's something there, but it could be the entry to a development. It could be a lot of things, and the fact that even City Hall gets blocked by vegetation and trees and everything there. It would be hard for anybody to know that there are things to do back here.

From the sign perspective, I said there's a variety of identification signs that are required. So, this is our translation into that visual brand. You have a lot of the post and panel white sort of decorative scalloped signs. These would replace those. We are recommending in this design right now that we incorporate the brick that you see on the buildings. So, think about your brand, it is not just putting the bell on the signs, but thinking about how we are consistent in the materials that we are using. It doesn't have to be super expensive. We can look at building out these signs and using brick veneer which is something that is used on signs all the time. There are ways that we can ensure that the costs are reduced; but the designs that we are recommending for some of these facilities are a bit more substantial than what you have in place.

If we have to, we have some play in there to do some cost analysis and kind of take down the use of masonry or brick or stone if we need to.

Jim Riley asked the top part be stone, like etched stone where it says Service Department?

Ms. Fromet said no, those will be aluminum panels. The recommendation is that is aluminum. So, these are going to be constructed signs that just have portions of it using brick or stone masonry, and then the aluminum panels will allow for you to change things out if you need to like if it requires maintenance or cleaning or you decide to change the name of the Service Department, you can do so. We do recommend construction and materials that will allow for those panels to be raised.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Ms. Fromet so we will look at cost of lighting, or we can have them built and constructed to accept lighting at a later date where you may not have to do it right away, depending on how really the cost is going to come down to trenching out to a site to bring electrical to that site. So, if you don't want to do it right now, we can still have the signs constructed so they accept it.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked what about solar?

Ms. Fromet said solar is a possibility too. You would still need to have some trenching, but you could possibly do it closer. I can't speak to that until I can look at the sites out here to see where we can put like the solar receptors, but you would still have to trench to those areas.

Councilperson Veverka said a lot of those signs have solar lights right on them.

Ms. Fromet said they do, so we would just have to look at how we are constructing it. It's possible that we might be able to put panels on the top of these.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said we should check into that.

Ms. Fromet said some of them look a little funny.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I thought we had an ordinance against illuminated signs.

Councilperson Trakas said it was passed in 2020.

Ms. Fromet asked is it internally illuminated, or spot illuminated?

Councilperson Walchanowicz said internally because there was the church on Brookside, they wanted to do an illuminated sign, and the BZA didn't approve it.

Jim Riley said the City doesn't have to follow the code.

Ms. Fromet said you don't, but you do open a can of worms if you do that.

The other thing we do, and this is what we would recommend in this instance; if you don't illuminate, you can still use reflective material, which on most vehicular signs we recommend if they are not illuminated anyway. So, if headlights hit it, it does illuminate at night. So, you still get that ability to see it at night. So, in either instance, we allow for that flexibility depending on what you guys want and what is allowable.

We have also designed some post and panel signs. Again, if we had to do some post and panel signs for some facility signs, maybe it's a facility that you don't want to celebrate with a lot of brand, we could always go to this level here; but this is also what we are recommending for most of your park signs.

Jim Riley asked are those aluminum panels also?

Ms. Fromet replied yes.

Jim Riley asked what's the cost difference between those and etched ones?

Ms. Fromet said honestly there is not a whole lot of cost difference between those two. Typically, they are not using etched wood anymore. It's just a type of foam that they use. The longevity of the materials are the same. I think there's more that goes into it if you have to replace one of those etched panels versus the aluminum. So, I think maintenance costs might be a little bit higher. I think longevity for both of them is fine. I think the costs are pretty similar. It really depends on the look that you are going for. I do know a lot of parks kind of like that look, but if we are thinking about the alignment with the City's brand, I think this works just as well. We actually do have a lot of park systems that we are working with that are moving away from sort of that carved wood or wood posts because they are leaning more towards like longevity and the long-term maintenance.

Councilperson Trakas asked so, these would replace the white ones?

Ms. Fromet said they would, yes. From a directional sign standpoint, we do have some of these larger ones. So, on larger roads like main city street roads, we would recommend some of these larger signs. These would again replace the white panels that you have out here. Once you get on campus, we do have a little bit smaller scale signs that fit the context of the campus.

Also, I just put this in here because there was some discussion that there might be signs with some type of campus map that the parks were looking to do. Is that correct?

Economic Development Director Hyser said yes, Parks & Rec reached out to us about doing a campus type map so that people, when they come into the park system have a better sense of the you are here type; and since we're working with Cathy on the entire wayfinding, I wanted to make sure the park was taken into consideration as we decide that entire sign program.

Ms. Fromet said so, this was the example that they shared with us. This is more of a realistic, illustrative comprehensive look. So, it wouldn't be just a flat map that you would usually get from a GIS. It's something that has a little bit more dimension, is a little bit more interactive. It should be designed so that it is used on signs, but it also could live on your website. It can be used for a variety of things.

Then, the other piece of the overall sign program that we were looking to implement this year was the banner program throughout the City, and there was some key areas. So, I had mentioned before, we do have color coding that we were recommending on Rockside Road. Rockside has, there is a whole different type of sign program that we have recommended for Rockside. It looks a little different than the rest of the City because Rockside has a different feel. One of the things that we did know was that on Rockside there's some complexity to where you are and where you are going. So, we had recommended a color-coding system for that using parts of the brand color. There's some of them that we haven't agreed to the colors yet. We are going to be working through that through this final design process; but through this banner program we wanted to begin to look at how do we incorporate that color-coding system based on where we are putting these banners. Just so we begin to sort of, it's a little bit more of a mental exercise so people begin to relate the color of the banners to the certain areas of the roads. They would still be on brand. They would still be designed similar to what we shared. We shared some of these designs

in the brand guidelines, but we would look on Rockside to implement the color-coding along with the new design.

The plan is that we would utilize any of the existing infrastructure that you guys already have in place for your banner systems. So, the banners would be designed so that they are accepted with the existing hardware that you have, and this was information that Jessica was able to provide to us; and our recommendation is that you do begin to put these banners in the areas that you already have this existing piece. So, on Rockside we would work through some of the color coding pieces, but in some of the other areas of the City, we would use probably more of a general like citywide banner design.

So, I think that is all that we were looking to implement this year. Is that correct?

Economic Development Director Hyser said that is correct.

Councilperson Narduzzi said so I'm a little confused with the colored banners. So, if you are coming in from out of town, how do you know what red means, what gold means?

Economic Development Director Hyser said so, what will happen is this is laying the foundation for the work to be rolled out later, and so we were trying to be cognizant of the investment we are making. So, what will happen is probably next year, if we do a little bit more communication with the business community and say hey if you are trying to get people here, and you are in the blue district; and we will provide them tools and resources to help educate their customers. If somebody calls the Holiday Inn and is looking to get there, we will direct them using that color-coded system. As more and more elements of the color-coding system roll out, it will make it a little bit easier; but this is just kind of laying that basic foundation.

Ms. Fromet said you are right, it's not going to mean anything to anybody just coming in the first place, but it still will look on brand. So, it won't matter. When it will matter is when the rest of the program comes into place, and then people would begin seeing it.

Economic Development Director Hyser said we know that we can't undertake the entire program all at once because of the cost. So, we take little bits and pieces, and we will be able to build it out over a reasonable period of time.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked will the banners stay up year-round?

Economic Development Director Hyser said that's a question because right now they generally come down in December, but they go back up in April to make way for the Christmas lighting. So, that's a conversation we are going to have to have with Service; but one of the things, kind of the next phase is also, I want to call them doo dads, but that's not what they are called. They are little emblems that you could put up on top of some of the street signage to help implement that color coding system. So, this again is just the first step. There will be several additional layers to help build the color-coding system on Rockside.

Councilperson Narduzzi said and just ballpark rough cost because I am thinking everybody in the world has this.

Economic Development Director Hyser said so the issue is when you have that, that is great; but still when you are driving down the road, and it doesn't tell you what road you are. Or you are confused because you are in a new area. This would add an extra layer of confidence to be able to make smart driving decisions. I can't tell you how many times I have driven down Rockside Road, and you get stuck behind somebody who is careening three lanes over because they want to make a quick turn, and they didn't know where they were going. So, as much as mobile devices are helpful, this gives people a better sense of confidence to make those decisions.

Ms. Fromet said so, we get the question all the time, well everybody has a phone so why do we need signage and wayfinding? Well, the phone will tell you streets in which you need to turn, but the phone does not tell you final destinations. The phone doesn't necessarily tell you; it will tell you that you arrived in a place; but it might not be where you want to be celebrating. So, if you are thinking about this as also an extension of the image of your City and your brand, you know if you are on that phone, you are going to be driving into a place; and it's going to tell you that you arrived at Independence, and it may not be the area that you want people to be like oh this is Independence. The sign program is going to be that visual, and especially banners. You know, banners are a way, actually are a pretty cost-effective way to sort of celebrate and define districts. This is probably going to be the most economical part of the sign program that's going to be most impactful to really celebrate an area or you know areas and entry points.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked how big are these banners going to be?

Ms. Fromet said we are going to keep them the standard size for what you have in place now.

Economic Development Director Hyser said part of the issue is that there were banners on Rockside that had the old brand, so we can't hang those back up. So, we need to do something on a banner to replace those banners. So, we are going to replace those banners, and it's more cost-effective to take this step to implement some of the wayfinding at that time.

Jim Riley said we can print those in-house. We have a machine that could do that.

Ms. Fromet said, and that's part of the discussion because I had asked earlier how you were producing your banners previously.

Jim Riley said the American hero ones, I don't know who was the previous one; but that new machine they bought in Community Service, that was one of the things they had said. You had to buy the whatever it is and like you could do those in-house once you decide what size you want. That was what they said when the machine was bought.

Ms. Fromet said I think that's an important discussion because part of this, you know really what we want to do here is take these designs and get them to the point that they are getting implemented this year, starting with the banner program. The banner program is going to be first,

but I think we are also going to want to have conversations with the Service Department anyway because as we design the sign program for this campus as well, we are going to want to know what their capabilities are. While you might have the initial sign built and fabricated and installed by a sign contractor, a local sign contractor in the area; we might want to ensure that components of that sign can be maintained and updated by the Service Department. So, we will want to know any specs that you guys have in place so that we can make sure that it happens.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said so, we have the poles, the existing, the old banners. We got feedback. People already say we like the banners.

Economic Development Director Hyser said I think they will like the aesthetics of Rockside Road. I mean that's something that we get compliments on is that Rockside is attractive, especially when you drive it in the summer. They see the hanging baskets, the banners. It just literally sets the stage for the community. Nobody says Jess I really like that banner.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Economic Development Director Hyser said so, our goal is for Cathy to help lead us through this project. She has put together a proposal. Cathy, remind me again the amount of the proposal through this phase.

Ms. Fromet said so, if I take out, because I just added in like the maps and stuff. If we are just looking at the banners and the community campus that we were looking at it, I believe that it was around \$22,000.00, and that's taking you guys all the way through implementation, meaning we are going to help you manage the fabricators, make sure that what is getting built is aligned with the design intent, and that we are helping you kind of navigate any of the issues that typically come up when you are building and installing these signs in a city.

Then if there's, I think to help with the mapping is another like \$3,500.00, and then I added some contingency because sometimes you guys might decide that there is a change to the design as presented, or I think we were looking at the possibility of adding a sign that would house that map inside for the community campus.

Economic Development Director Hyser said so, the goal would be to be able to green light Cathy and her team to move forward with this. So, I am hoping that if Council is in agreement, that we are able to place this on the agenda for next Tuesday's meeting. If there needs to be some additional discussion, let me know.

Councilperson Togliatti asked do we have a total budget estimate of the cost of all the banners and construction of all the signs, and the full implementation of this?

Economic Development Director Hyser said we have components of it broken down, and we can share that with Council. If you want it in advance, I am happy to provide that information.

Councilperson Togliatti said it would be good to have.

Ms. Fromet said I do believe we broke it down for the community campus, a budget for that; so, the intent would be to make sure that as we move forward with this, that we are going to stick within that budget. So, again our fee, that additional fee is to address any, I will call it, design adjustments that might need to be made so that we can make sure that we stay within that budget; and I believe it was built at a time, and there was some cost consideration for the increase that we have seen with materials and fabrication over the last two years because it's been more.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked if this gets introduced and approved at the April meeting, how long until these banners are up? Would we wait another season until next year?

Ms. Fromet said the banners would be right away. I believe the sign program, we are far enough, but there are still some decisions that need to be made that there's a potential that we could see this bidding out by the end of the summer, and depending on what type, maybe fabricating over the winter and depending on installation conditions.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked so, the signage won't be ready until next year in 2024?

Economic Development Director Hyser said depending on how quickly we can go.

Mayor Kurtz said if we get some direction from Council, actually we would be in a better position to take advantage of that.

Ms. Fromet said because there's a lot that we have already known and have already done, so it's really can we just get some final decisions? Can we ensure that everything is going to stay within the budget?

Mayor Kurtz said that will be the goal.

Ms. Fromet said that we can move quickly.

Mayor Kurtz said we also want to keep moving forward. We don't want to stall.

Councilperson Trakas said I would just say, when we first started talking about this, we kind of made, I thought a decision that we didn't want to replace all the City signs in the neighborhoods; but if we start replacing them here in the City campus with these, then every other street is not going to look like what we have in the City campus.

The other thing is on the campus area, people who use these facilities live here, and they don't get lost.

Ms. Fromet said that's not true.

Economic Development Director Hyser said it's hard finding Elmwood Rec, so a lot of residents will use that facility, and they will rent it out; and they are either having a baby shower or a wedding shower, or whatever it is and trying to get their people there, especially with the Old

Rec, the Elmwood Rec, whatever you want to call it. There is not a sign out there, and so it gets challenging.

The tee ball field, there's a tiny little sign that tells you where the tee ball field is, but it's challenging to get people back to those places.

Mayor Kurtz said what Jessica indicated, the campus is not well-identified. There are elements, and you turn onto Selig and there are a variety of different stops along the way. There are different locations to go to. If we start having these signs more clearly the station and consistent with our theme in the campus area. The campus is what we want to start with. I agree with Jim. We really want to savor this campus first and see what gels.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Ms. Fromet said, and even though it changed in this campus area, it becomes really sort of aligned with the City assets, and the streets are the streets. The residential streets, so you kind of leave those as they are unless someone thinks that's cool and when can we get new stuff.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Economic Development Director Hyser said it would be something that whenever there's a street improvement project, then there might be the consideration of signage.

Councilperson Trakas said so, to do that, if you want to do it in this area, could we just keep with the consistent signs that we have now with the wood. People really like that. The one thing I like is that it's unique. You don't go to other cities and see that. We kind of differentiate ourselves by having things that are different than just kind of general-purpose type things, and is there a problem with that?

Ms. Fromet said you could look at that. I think when we were approaching the design for this, a lot of the discussion we had was that there is a new brand for the City. That is a very traditional look, and it is not that unique because it is seen in other places; and this is a way to present a more forward-looking but still some traditional elements in things. So, this is really an update to the image of your City using the new brand and the translation of that with the colors and materials.

Economic Development Director Hyser said I want to say too, we are asking is this to build on the City's monument style signs? So, this would kind of put us back in par with that, and we can landscape around it and add that extra level of sophistication to consider.

Mayor Kurtz said our business community, it reflects what we see, what we expect, and it's easier for them to try to emulate or be consistent with the quality that we expect. We have a situation right now where we have a business that is trying to align a sign, but it is not consistent with the quality that we expect. That right there, it's more of that picture there. It's a better image.

Ms. Fromet said the way that I look at it, your image and your character do mean something, and the quality that you want to present. At least from a quality perspective, the City has always maintained everything impeccably. So, even with the wood signs that you have in place, they are maintained well, and so they continue to look nice. So, you have taken care of your image; but if you're looking to move forward, which with this next brand is the intent, it just makes sense to make that transition at this time. You start out small, and we would consider the community campus to be small, but it will be a place that people get to interface with it a bit.

You know, like we said, Rockside Road is a little different; but there have been a lot of improvements on Rockside that make it hopefully nice. What we want to do is we want to improve, help people move through that area so that it's not confusing. I think there was another district that we had identified, even just the more historical downtown area was another that we had identified that could potentially use some additional updates to the signage. Again, those are not initial recommendations, those are later down the road. We would start here.

Mayor Kurtz said we identify more currently. They will know where the Police Department is. They will know where the tee ball field is. They will know where the Old Rec building is, and it's a small footprint. We are maintaining our tradition; it allows us to have a vision. Let's see how the people receive it in this small venue. If they really receive it well, then we will have a pretty good indication of how we go in the future with the other areas. We won't know unless we try.

Councilperson Trakas said the large sign that we would put on Brecksville and Selig, we call that community campus. A lot of people don't follow that path, so maybe we could call it that, but maybe put Civic Center and Recreation down at the bottom so they know what else is there.

Mayor Kurtz said I agree with you on this. That sign we need to talk about that. That's one that we need to pause, and really see how these do before we tackle that one.

Ms. Fromet said, and so what we would probably do in that area is maybe focus on using the banners to call out that entry, or we could even do a smaller scale sign at least to start, or even putting a directional out there, some kind of vehicular directional on both sides of Brecksville that direct you.

Councilperson Narduzzi said Dale Lytkowski wants that clock tower.

Councilperson Trakas said he wanted a clock tower on every street.

Mayor Kurtz said we need to have a more roundtable discussion. As far as I am concerned, that could be, we could toss that, and see these, how well we implement, how successful we are; and then that would be the indicators as far as I am concerned.

Ms. Fromet said sounds good.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Jim Riley said people are always asking where's the Police Station, where's the Fieldhouse, all the time. We have people who come in from out of town and get lost in our park.

Vice Mayor Grendel said, and we do have a lot of people coming in with the ballgames. The Fieldhouse not quite as often as we used to.

Jim Riley said the baseball tournament, we can get a lot of people in.

Ms. Fromet said one, it's not going to hurt anybody in the City who already lives here and knows where they are going to see nice new signs. Like that is just going to make them go wow that looks really nice, and it makes my community look nice; but signage and wayfinding is always for those who are unfamiliar, like always. Like the visitor, even if they are only here for one time because one bad experience, one bad look is going to make people not feel great about where they are at. That is always how it is.

It's been a very long time, but I worked on Ohio stadium, and at one point and time somebody says that everybody has their ticket. They know exactly where they are going, but I am like but there's always a first time that somebody comes into that stadium, and they don't know. If you have ever been to that stadium, it has over 20 entries. So, it's very complicated to move people around spaces. They get out of their seats. They go to the concessions. They go to the bathroom. Just because people are familiar with a place doesn't mean that they know every nook and cranny of it.

Vice Mayor Grendel said look how many years we have been engaged in this, what two or three years.

Economic Development Director Hyser said it's been about two years now.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said we will just keep going. Let people know who we are and where to go, and we want to do it incrementally. We are not asking for a full-blown strategy.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said Cathy you have done all the design work. You are going to assist us in the process.

Ms. Fromet said this is to get things ready for vetting so that we can find a good quality fabricator who can build these signs for you guys.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said so at the time, and that's the next time we are going to talk about this, if we are going to award to a contractor.

Ms. Fromet said correct.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked but, do we get to pick designs?

Ms. Fromet said, well, there's still some flexibility though. Like this, the next contract is to get us moving into sort of this final documentation. If you see there's options here, and we need to get some final decisions where that's going.

Councilperson Trakas said in terms of the color fastness, I like a blue sign; but are they colorfast?

Ms. Fromet said so, typically for signs, and we have actually done a lot of signs that have blue in it because they do fade. The blues and reds tend to fade, but we use specific automotive quality paints that have some pretty good longevity that are specifically made for exterior signage.

Councilperson Togliatti said, and these signs that are up on the screen right now, outside of the font, how do they necessarily align with our new brand?

Ms. Fromet said whenever we talk about aligning with brand, I can give you a whole webinar on it's not about just putting the logo on everything. So, it's the consistent use of the materials of the colors, of the type face that is seen throughout the area that is going to align with your brand and your image.

Economic Development Director Hyser said it's the options of the brand, and these examples are incorporating some of that bell as well as part of our brand.

Ms. Fromet said right.

Councilperson Togliatti asked so then, we will change the Welcome To Independence signs at each one of our borders? Where does it stop? Right now, we are consistent across the board, and I can see if we add a few additional signs, does it meet the goal of wayfinding?

Economic Development Director Hyser said so, some of those old signs, based on the dimensions, they don't fit the standards, so at some point they really need to be updated. We have had people talk to us about how the street signs are too small. That they can't be seen. The lettering isn't in the right format. So, eventually those signs are going to need to be upgraded. This is something again, why we are looking at this to take pieces of it and roll it out over several years so that we are not doing it all at once because that is a heavy lift.

Ms. Fromet said, and there was even some discussion, so you are talking about the entry signs, the gateway signs that are in place. I know when we were polling people, and we started initially doing the wayfinding analysis, a lot of people talked about it's hard to see those signs. They can't see them. The scale of them is quite small for the roads, but we also talked about how can we re-use those signs. How can we move them. I think we talked about possibly moving them to the trails. That could be a nice opportunity because they really are pedestrian sized and not vehicular sized; but also, to your point, I know you said something about not changing the signs for the residential and the streets, and they look nice, and they are different than other cities.

They are not in compliance with the MUTCD which is the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices. They are not compliant with the standards for readability on the streets. So, that's another thing we had talked about and looked at.

Economic Development Director Hyser asked is there any objection about putting this on the agenda for next Tuesday?

Councilperson Togliatti said I would like to see the total scope budget, timeframe, limits of the project.

Mayor Kurtz said we will get that out to all of Council. We will put it on the agenda then, and we will still get that information out so you will have a roadmap. Fair enough?

Councilperson Togliatti asked, and so, will there be wayfinding signs for the schools and the Fieldhouse as well or is it just the City?

Ms. Fromet said no, if it's within the campus, if it's getting them to within the campus yes.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said the Fieldhouse is a joint facility and should be on there.

Ms. Fromet said, and that's why we called it sort of the community campus, so it incorporates a lot of things.

Economic Development Director Hyser said not just the City.

Vice Mayor Grendel said so Jess, it gets us started with banners for this time of the year come summer.

We will get that information and move on it next week. Hopefully, we will have the information.

Mayor Kurtz said we will get the information out, and put it on the agenda, and we will keep moving, slowly but surely.

Ms. Fromet said for the banners I will use the budget numbers that we know banners cost from an outside vendor; but if you internally do it yourself.

Councilperson Veverka asked are the banners going to be in the four colors?

Economic Development Director Hyser said we are still working on the colors.

Councilperson Veverka said but that's what I am saying. We are planning to put up the banners, are we sure that we are going to have a blue segment, a red segment? There was conversation about all the segment areas.

Economic Development Director Hyser said they will be color-coded yes.

Councilperson Trakas said but, if we are putting them up where the existing banners are, they should probably be one consistent color for that.

Councilperson Veverka said I would say no. If you are going to put banners up and have those four regions, why would it make sense to have them all be the same colors.

Vice Mayor Grendel said the north side of Rockside, the northeast side of Rockside would be one color.

Ms. Fromet said from a design perspective, they are going to work together.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Veverka said because otherwise we are going to be backtracking the effort.

Vice Mayor Grendel agreed.

Mayor Kurtz said we have our marching orders, and we will get the information out to Council, and it will be on the agenda for next week.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Vice Mayor Grendel said well Mayor, the last item on the agenda is the ODOT property.

Economic Development Director Hyser said there's one more thing.

Mayor Kurtz said Chris will talk to the owner, and we will meet on site.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked do you want me to take it Dave?

Vice Mayor Grendel said okay Chris.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said so as everyone knows, Dave and I had discussions with a potential purchaser of the ODOT property last week. During Dave's and my conversation, there are some other companies that would be interested in that particular project, the property. So, I think moving forward it might be best in the City's interest to put it to a public bid or sale, and we talked about that property, and then also, the triangle piece by the street.

Mayor Kurtz said we acquired that from the City of Cleveland years ago when they abandoned their need because originally, they were going to put a pump station on that property. So, we acquired it. So, you are saying take that property and take the ODOT property and advertise to potentially sell or lease?

Councilperson Trakas asked, and that's after we are done with it or now?

Mayor Kurtz said now. I think what we are saying is we have to make a decision. We have to figure out what we want to do, and the only way we are able to do that is if we go out and see what type of response we get. We are under no obligation to do anything.

Councilperson Togliatti said right, and what was the reason we bought the ODOT property?

Mayor Kurtz said we bought the property for a three-year window as I mentioned the last time. One, to use the salt dome immediately, and that we have some additional storage. That was under, I think I indicated a three-year strategy. The first year was to frame up and come up with a location and do some homework on the needs of the Service Department.

The second opportunity was to prepare plans, do several studies to determine the operational needs and the technology needs of today, and the third year would be to build a new Service Department.

Councilperson Togliatti said right, so we have owned this property for six months, so why are we going to sell it now, six months into this three year?

Mayor Kurtz said because if we could still use it, and we can get money for either one of those properties now that are underutilized. We won't do anything if we don't find a deal that's good for the City of Independence; but we won't know until we find out, check the temperature of the opportunity. So, I am willing to take the temperature, and if there's something that's good for the City, and we can still utilize it and use it until we don't need it, or there's a better opportunity out there, I think this may be a strategy. Only Council can buy and sell property. So, if we get something that gets our attention, we can then address it. If we don't, it's no damage to us.

Councilperson Togliatti said I guess I didn't understand the purchase from the get-go because we could have utilized it at no cost through the State of Ohio, through ODOT and store our vehicles and achieve the use of the salt dome and the storage of our vehicles; but instead we purchased it, and we wanted to keep it for three years until we figure out what we are doing with the Service Garage. Now we are selling it six months into owning it.

Mayor Kurtz said we aren't doing anything with it.

Councilperson Togliatti said we are talking about offering it for sale.

Mayor Kurtz said we don't know what we are doing.

Councilperson Togliatti said plus the Chairman of the Public Lands & Buildings stated that the value of having all of our equipment under roof and out of the weather; so I am just torn with the whole process that we have taken and where we are going and why we are going in this direction.

Mayor Kurtz said well, I guess we will find out, and this is one way to find out.

Councilperson Togliatti said well, I guess we need to find out before we make a decision on what we want to do right?

Mayor Kurtz said no, I think you want to gather facts, gather data.

Councilperson Togliatti said you said it would take three years to gather facts.

Mayor Kurtz said I understand. Now that was for a new Service Department. That was for a new Service Department.

Councilperson Togliatti said to fill the need in the meantime.

Mayor Kurtz said let's find out what it's worth. Let's find out what the value is.

Councilperson Togliatti said you can get it appraised.

Mayor Kurtz said that's one way of doing it, but I think the more important thing we want to do is to find out if there's a vehicle out there for two pieces of property that are available that we own, and what the market value and what the temperature is like out there.

Councilperson Veverka asked is there a concern about purchasing a property from the State of Ohio, and then very quickly flipping it? Isn't that a concern?

Mayor Kurtz asked why?

Councilperson Veverka said I don't know. That's why I asked the question.

Mayor Kurtz said people buy houses and sell them or buy buildings and sell them, and they buy properties and sell them. It may be only worth what we paid for it. It may be worth more. The only way we are going to find out is if we find out. We take a temperature. We do it publicly.

Councilperson Togliatti said I guess the two questions I have is why did we buy it and why are we selling it? I need the answer to those before I can make a decision on how to move forward.

Mayor Kurtz said well, you aren't really making a decision to go forward unless we have something on the table that says we want to.

Councilperson Togliatti said you are talking about offering it for sale, and Council is the body that can sell a piece of property. So, I guess that would be making a decision.

Mayor Kurtz said no, the decision only would be to go out for a public letting. If Council doesn't want to do something, we don't have to do anything.

Councilperson Togliatti said I just want to understand the rationale behind why we are doing what we are doing and why we purchased it in the first place.

Mayor Kurtz said well, I already outlined why we did it.

Councilperson Togliatti said well, it was this three-year process, and we are six months into the three-year process, so we are truncating that logic.

Mayor Kurtz said I think you have to think bigger. You have to think bigger, and you have to look at all the opportunities and weigh your options. That's what we do anytime we make a decision; we weigh our options. Right now, we don't know what our options are.

Vice Mayor Grendel said Mayor, I believe there are some entities out there that are interested in that property. By going this way, we are going to find out how interested they are and to what extent they are, and the ramification of this is we might lose a company here with a payroll that might cost the City revenue. So, that is the ramification I got is that the decision we make here and see what the interest is, has a financial impact on the City, both short term and long term. This truly will get to what the interest is and opening it up to different entities. So, we aren't talking to one entity, we are talking to different entities that have an interest in it. We will find out truly what that interest is, and it won't be sold, or it won't be done in the next year or two. The City has to get busy with their plans with the Service Department. So, it does put a little pressure on the City to move on it because we have an antiquated Service Department. It has been antiquated for a number of years. Everybody likes to kick things down the road until somebody else picks up the responsibility. Now we are saying either crap or get off the pot and everything. Let's find out what we need to do because you can't say that the Service Department is adequate the way it is with all the equipment we have. It might have been state-of-the-art in 1976 or 1975, but it's not state-of-the-art anymore. It's decrepit as far as that goes and try to sink money into that and bring it up to date, it's like trying to put a dome over the old stadium that they talked about.

What the Mayor is trying to say is at least find out what the true interest is. We are not committed to any of that, but until we go forward, we don't know what the true value of that is. Did we overpay for it or not, and like I said, I think we need to know in order to keep one of our businesses here. Otherwise, we might be losing a payroll.

Jim Riley said hey Dave, to address the Service Department, I don't know if you realize how bad it is. Ron and I have gone on a couple of tours, one was in the Route 18 area, Lodi; we have the prints from the building, and a lot of the engineering and drawings are all done as far as using an example of what you would need. They really are something to see how ODOT does them now, but that place over there getting all the ignitions out when the guys are working on a truck, getting all of our trucks in and out, and having it, there is a need for a new Service garage. Ron's not here, but he asked me if I could come and speak on that part. Dave, you said it was antiquated, and it is.

Councilperson Trakas asked until we make a decision, can we use that garage for what we need? I mean can you make both of these work? You renovate them so that they are modern, and they are useful. We have two of them now. We got one for a pretty good deal, the one down there.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said the research that we have done, you are putting all this equipment under one roof. You pull in, you stage it in the parking area, and you are ready to go. You pull out, it's clean. It's dry and ready to go.

Councilperson Trakas said I guess if you had this down here, while you are doing that, you can store things and work out of this other area. It's a little premature to spin it off.

Mayor Kurtz said we are not even sure we will spin it off.

Councilperson Togliatti asked what's your cost, what we go through?

Mayor Kurtz said I guess we will find out. We will do a public letting, and the Vice Mayor has indicated there's several interested parties.

Councilperson Togliatti asked, and who has expressed interest?

Mayor Kurtz said let's find out publicly. Let the public find out.

Councilperson Togliatti said that's where we are at here.

Mayor Kurtz said when we get bidders on road jobs, you don't know who is going to bid the job.

Vice Mayor Grendel said is it just talk, or are they really interested.

Mayor Kurtz said well let's find out. That's a good point. I would support Council's initiative on this, and if we can get a response, then we can have facts to back up other options.

Councilperson Togliatti asked is this really Council's initiative?

Mayor Kurtz said well, Council has to do it because Council is the one that brought it up.

Councilperson Togliatti said I understand that aspect of it, but I think it was, I don't even know how it came about, but I don't think it emanated from Council.

Mayor Kurtz said well, I don't know. I wasn't at any meetings.

Vice Mayor Grendel said it was the interest of a couple of companies that approached us. I said well, Chris and I went on a fact-finding meeting with one and have had other discussions. I know how everything else goes, we talk about a Service Department, but ten years from now, we

could be doing the same thing, and still nothing. I think in my 20 years on Council, the most investment that has been made has been made on the Service equipment. It was millions of dollars, and I would like to see some longevity. I would like to see us take advantage of the investments. Not that we are not maintaining them, but I think we can maintain them in a better way.

Mayor Kurtz said I think Council indicated through our Strategic Planning session, they prioritized, and they said Police and Service were the two highest priorities.

Councilperson Trakas said there is a big void of what are we going to do there. There's a lot of ideas, but there's never been anything.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we have talked about it, and nothing ever gets done.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked how many facts can we talk about? You know, the information that you and I received before it goes to the public bidding? Without naming names, can we give some of the information that they gave us?

Mayor Kurtz said I guess it's pretty simple. We don't have anything to speak about if we don't know what the value of the property is. If we don't do some type of public letting. So, it's premature as far as I am concerned to speculate until we get some facts.

Councilperson Veverka said I heard you say property or properties. I heard the garage. I also heard this triangular site, two pieces, two separate bids. The reason I asked that is because if you package them, you eliminate possible people with interest.

Mayor Kurtz said I wouldn't package them.

Councilperson Veverka said well that's what I am saying. I purchased stuff because it was packaged, and that kept other bidders away.

Mayor Kurtz said I wouldn't do that.

Councilperson Veverka said well that's why I am asking, and to be packaged separately if you are going to solicit bids.

Councilperson Togliatti said I was under the impression in the past that you had stated that triangular piece was key for our gateway signage in that area for the City to maintain that.

Councilperson Trakas said we were going to straighten out the road or something.

Councilperson Veverka said bring it out at 90 degrees. That's what I thought was the discussion we had.

Mayor Kurtz said let's find out what it's worth. Why not. It might be worth a heck of a lot more than a gateway sign.

Councilperson Togliatti asked are we going to do this with all the property in the downtown district too? Just put it up for sale and see what it's worth.

Mayor Kurtz said at some point.

Councilperson Togliatti asked why are we picking these two?

Mayor Kurtz said because these are two that have a possibility to do something larger for the community possibly. If not, I think there's a payroll, there's opportunity.

Vice Mayor Grendel said one is if we don't do something then there's definitely going to be a \$5,000,000 to \$7,000,000 loss of payroll. That's a definite.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurt said we are doing a lot of work. We work really hard to maintain payroll, to enhance the City. That's why our income tax is pretty stable considering all that we have had to go through the last three years. So, if we can maintain a \$7,000,000 payroll or a \$5,000,000 payroll, the last time I checked that \$5,000,000 that's \$100,000 a year. Five or ten years, and that's \$1,000,000.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Vice Mayor Grendel said there's another company that has a high interest too that may want to move there. We want to see what the true value is. The main thing, my concern is I hate to see to lose that kind of money to their business and everything. The plan is for them, at least they would guarantee a certain number of years for us if they stay in town.

Councilperson Togliatti asked but if we sell something at a public bid, how can, and there's no economic incentive tied to it, how can we have them commit?

Mayor Kurtz said well, you own the asset, and you are determined to sell it, you can establish some parameters.

Councilperson Togliatti asked so, those parameters are going to be built into the sale?

Mayor Kurtz said no. Just like anything, I am not sure if you bought any property when you were in charge; but you establish the parameters before you make a deal. So, if you don't like the deal, you don't sell it. On the other hand, if you are going to vote no, then you are going to vote no anyway; so, if we are consistent, I don't want to waste a lot of time. I don't want to be sitting here. I am not going to negotiate anything because this is up to City Council to determine a strategy, to maintain a payroll, to utilize our assets. In real estate, there are highs and lows in the

market. There is a value in every market. In the market of Rockside Road, we have all witnessed how it's gone up and how it has gone down. If you sell at the right time, you do alright. If you buy at the right time, you do alright. We bought property at the northwest quadrant for \$2,500,000. What did we end up doing with it? It costs us a lot of money right now to try to sort these things out. So, I don't want to waste a lot of time.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I see why you are bringing it now and not waiting.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I guess I am confused on why it's even going out to bid. You are not putting in what you could possibly lose, and what you could possibly gain by making a deal with this one entity. Somebody could buy that property and dump dirt on it, and they aren't going to pay us anything. Where here, you know you are getting \$100,000 a year guaranteed, and if you look at a ten-year period, that's \$1,000,000. It could have dirt on there for ten years, and you aren't going to get squat. So, don't be frightened by a number, I don't know what the deal is, and I guess I don't need to know at this point; but I am sure it's more than what we paid for it and how much more does it have to be to come down to that number that it's a good deal for the City.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Technical difficulties ensued with the recording.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I think there's a lot more at stake than just a piece of property. I say yes.

Mayor Kurtz said I have two yesses, and I need four.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked do we want to put it out to bid?

Mayor Kurtz said that's the question, do we want to put it out for bid? Bid out those two properties, and I think Dale said bid them out separately. Then, we will see what the value is in the market. Then we can decide, Council can decide if it gets their attention, and they want to do something. If not, there's nothing lost. Okay, what do you want to do? I don't mean to rush, but I have to go to a wake, and that's why I am trying to end this.

Vice Mayor Grendel said so, we made no promise. My feeling is that I never want to see anybody leave that's been here for a ton of years. The intangibles and the investment they put in. I would like to give them an opportunity, but then again, we have a need for it too; so it's a balancing act.

Councilperson Trakas said I would prefer to go through an economic development program. So, we know what's going on here, and I would rather just have it a sale based on economic development where we control the pricing a little bit differently. I think the history here is that they want to move quick, we should move quick.

Mayor Kurtz said that would be quickest way.

Councilperson Trakas said if you put it out to bid, it wouldn't be that quick; and I don't know how many people would bid on it. It doesn't sound like we would accept everybody's bid anyway. We know what we want to do, and I think the reality is that I think there should be more of like an economic development aspect of it. So, it's like if we really think that this is supposed to be for an economic development purpose, we should handle it that way.

Mayor Kurtz said we should put that as part of this, economic development impact.

Councilperson Trakas said if that's what we are really doing.

Mayor Kurtz said that's a good point, we can add that.

Vice Mayor Grendel said that's the important part of retaining what we have.

Councilperson Trakas said there must be a negotiation.

Mayor Kurtz said well, keep in mind Council will negotiate.

Councilperson Trakas said well, the last time we tried that, it didn't work so well. So, we have to know what the parameters are.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said well, you know what, that was a little more, there were some challenging conversations around that whole thing. So, by doing it this way, between what the Vice Mayor and the Public Lands Chairman it opens an opportunity for us to come up with something and negotiate.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I don't want to lose a facility where we have all of our stuff stored, out of the weather, extra salt dome. I don't want to lose a facility like that, but in the long run, I don't want to lose \$5,000,000 to \$7,000,000 in payroll, 200 employees. I don't want to lose that either. It's a hard, it's not an easy decision for anybody to make.

Councilperson Narduzzi said with the money you make on that property; you could put something up over here to house all of our stuff. ODOT put that concept down, \$50,000 or \$60,000.

Councilperson Trakas said, and maybe that's what you do, you allocate that fund to the first down payment to what you are going to do down there.

Mayor Kurtz said the long-term strategy for the Service Department is a first-class facility for the next 40 or 50 years.

Councilperson Trakas said I'm just saying, if you put the money into whatever you are going to do.

Mayor Kurtz said okay. I don't think anybody is disagreeing, it's just a matter of perspective, and there are a lot of things on the table that are economically development driven. We deal with those every day.

Councilperson Trakas said so, then let's do it that way. I would also further say that let's ask these two to negotiate on behalf of the City.

Mayor Kurtz said let's get it done. Let's publicly go after it, and then we can get it done that way. Then Council will be able to determine if they want to go and negotiate with whoever.

Councilperson Togliatti asked who recommended that way?

Mayor Kurtz asked what?

Councilperson Togliatti said the public bidding process.

Mayor Kurtz said I talked to the Vice Mayor, and so it makes sense. I am okay with it. We will facilitate it for you, and then you guys can make a decision.

Councilperson Trakas asked so then, we are going to bid it?

Mayor Kurtz said we will bid it out. We can do that quickly, but just tell me what you want to do. Four Councilman have to tell me what you want to do.

Councilperson Togliatti asked do you want to sell the old auto body shop too while we are at it?

Mayor Kurtz asked what are you talking about?

Councilperson Veverka said behind the cemetery.

Councilperson Togliatti said at the top of the hill behind the cemetery there.

Mayor Kurtz asked why would we want to sell that?

Councilperson Togliatti asked why are we selling this?

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Narduzzi said we are selling this to keep a business here.

Mayor Kurtz said that's part of our cemetery. I don't understand the correlation.

Councilperson Togliatti said we aren't utilizing it.

Vice Mayor Grendel said the reason that Chris and I got involved is that we don't want to lose a company if we could accommodate. Then for a period of time at least, I don't know what their long-range plan is, but at least for a five-to-ten-year window, we will have them guarantee the kind of payroll that \$5,000,000 to \$7,000,000 generates for a year. I think it would behoove us to keep them here.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked, and we are still able to use the salt dome for a couple of years.

Councilperson Togliatti asked would we have to rent it?

Vice Mayor Grendel said no, and they would guarantee a period of years with us.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Vice Mayor Grendel said like I said, there was other interest shown in that too. We wanted to explore.

Councilperson Trakas said let's say the other guy comes up better, are we going to say, okay?

Vice Mayor Grendel said there's other factors involved. There's payroll involved and things of that nature. This is just not cut and dry.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said the words closed door sale of a piece of City property were brought up. So, if we do it this way, it doesn't look like the City is just making a deal like that.

Councilperson Trakas said I would support it.

Mayor Kurtz said okay, we are going to go to work. Jess, you have your marching orders, and then we will just go from there. We've heard Council. There are a lot of opportunities. Okay? We got our marching orders from Council, and we will follow up on it. We will keep you posted.

Anything else?

Vice Mayor Grendel asked anything else from Council? If not, can we have a motion to adjourn?

Councilperson DiGeronimo said I guess just next steps for the Police station and Service. We did the tour. We are going to talk.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said we will set up probably another meeting for that.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we would like to get that list. I know Dale mentioned too, the list of items that they had brought too. There were two things that are parallel. I think the Service

Department, at least in my eyes, would be Number One, and then the Police Department. Those are the two main.

Mayor Kurtz said I think we ought to look at it from the operational standpoint, and we ought to bring a firm. We will put the information together for people to do an assessment for us, both operationally and functionally for the Police Department; and then we may use the same one for the Service Department. What our needs are. What are the options for the future, and where we can go. We can do those on a parallel path too because one would get stalled, the other one won't. Soft cost money would be the start. We can do it through a process of, do an assessment or analysis of our operation. That will help us define room size. You heard all the logistics of this one.

The next one we will do is the Service Department. We will show you what we are doing there too.

Jim Riley said if you guys wanted to go on a tour of ODOT right off of I-77. That is way bigger, and you can see how they did it. It's really something to see.

Mayor Kurtz said these are 40- or 50-year decisions gentlemen, and that's the way I am looking at it.

Councilperson Veverka said it's unfortunate that when we did the Police Department, you didn't include the area to the west where there are the two garages and additional space there. So, just creating that, that we did not go over there. So, there is additional spaces that were originally designed as garages for the Police cars that are directly connected to drop off and everything else. So, there is another piece there that's on this. So, I'm just mentioning that.

Jim Riley said they are using that, the one I know as storage. There's not enough room.

Vice Mayor Grendel said Jim, I think maybe sometime in May or so we can take a trip to see one of these facilities, either ODOT or Westlake, or one of those.

Mayor Kurtz said we will list the framework of how we should go forward if Council approves it; and then we will bring in people that are disciplined in that area that will help us facilitate from an organizational standpoint an assessment and analysis so that we can then have data to back up why we need something.

Councilperson Trakas said, and then we can have a conversation about how we are going to pay for this stuff before we go out and do all the plans.

Councilperson Veverka said that is exactly what I was thinking. We don't have any 3% money.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said if you are not planning and looking forward, you are standing still and you are not getting after it. So, we will just continue to move the ball forward, and then ultimately Council can make some decisions that help us plan for the next several generations.

Vice Mayor Grendel said determine how much you are going to need as far as money goes. Right now, we don't know how much money.

Mayor Kurtz said these won't be out of our capital budget. They will be billed out of probably some type of financing.

Councilperson Trakas said I just think it's important to have that conversation first in generic terms, so we know what we are talking about.

Mayor Kurtz said well, let's have that conversation. We will have the Finance Director put it together what our options are. He did outline, by the way, I think you will recall, he did outline the different elements of financing a project. He outlined that, and how we have roughly a \$10,000,000 capital vacuum. Between internal capital and road projects, we eat that up. If you recall, the next couple of years we projected some \$22,000,000 of needs; and he clearly articulated the fact that we would have to go into some type of financing to achieve some of these things.

Councilperson Trakas said let us know all of our options.

Mayor Kurtz said I will have a detail.

Councilperson Trakas said so, just let us know all of our options and let's find out before we go hog wild on anything we should know what these things are going to be.

Councilperson Veverka said only because the other piece of that puzzle is typically, I know Tom you buy houses, you rehab the house too; and we don't go in and bulldoze it flat. We evaluate it. We do what we need to do with it and bring it up to the level that it's appropriate. So, that's my only concern is we get too much into the geeze we need to just wipe the slate clean and start from scratch. That may not make the most sense financially or be fiscally responsible.

Mayor Kurtz said I don't disagree, but taking the tour today at least gives you a visual. The next step would do the operational assessment and engage the people that are responsible for managing those departments and then come back to Council and say here's what we determined. Then we can start the strategy if we are going to renovate or build new or look at all of our options based on some data, or a little bit of both. I am not discounting anything when I suggest that by the way.

Councilperson Togliatti said along with that financial discussion, we also have to review the Mannik & Smith report and prioritize our road projects for the coming years.

Mayor Kurtz said I think we updated that.

Councilperson Togliatti said we were supposed to get it.

Councilperson Veverka said we haven't gotten it.

Mayor Kurtz said well, I will talk to Don. He's not very busy.

Councilperson Veverka said it's that time of year when he has nothing to do.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked can I have a motion to adjourn?

Mayor Kurtz said thank you Council, appreciate it.

Moved by Walchanowicz seconded by Veverka, to adjourn the Council Workshop of April 4, 2023, meeting. Voice Vote: 7 yes/0 no; motion carried.

There being no further business, the Council Workshop of April 4, 2023, was adjourned at 5:42 p.m.

Debra J. Beal, Clerk of Council
Minutes Unapproved at Time of Release 04/06/23
