

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE
UTILITIES & SEWERS COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
APRIL 29, 2021 AT 4:00 P.M.
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM**

Present: Chairman James Trakas
Councilperson Kenn Synek
Councilperson Dale Veverka

Also Present: Councilperson Kathleen Kapusta
Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz
Finance Director Vern Blaze
City Engineer Don Ramm
Economic Development Director Jessica Hyser
IT Department Ryan Prosser
Chris Kirkpatrick – CR Action Cable, Inc.

Chairman Trakas called the Utilities & Sewers Committee virtual meeting of April 29, 2021 to order at 4:01 p.m.

Chairman Trakas said we are a full committee and welcome everybody. On the agenda today we have a number of topics, and with the indulgence of the committee due to some time schedules, I wanted to see if we could take the third item of business first, the broadband access for residential and business community and City property without objection committee. No objection. We would like to proceed with that topic.

This came up the other day when we were discussing that the Federal Government is releasing funds, and one of the priorities for those funds are broadband access. So, the Mayor suggested that we put this as a topic of conversation, which is a good idea. Mayor, how would you like me to proceed? Would you like me to have you take it from here, or do you want to have the team? What makes sense?

Mayor Kurtz said well let me just kick it off maybe. Obviously, we recognize that it's going to cost money. In my Mayors' meeting today, they again reinforced the fact that there is \$2,000,000 here and more money there. They are going to make that a priority throughout the State; and access is probably their biggest priority which mainly affects more rural communities. There is going to be money available for efficiency, to make it better speed wise for broadband. So, as a result, in talking with Ryan, we framed up the fact that if you want to take Pleasant Valley down Brecksville Road, come into our campus and then proceed further north to Rockside, tee off on Rockside, and then further north to the Cloverleaf. That would be the main artery for our broadband, and some of it has already been plumbed so to speak with our burial of some of the lines when we did Route 21 and came up to the campus when we did Rockside Road. So, there's infrastructure upgrades that would give us complete access, and then we have to go and explore

the possibility or the terms of effectiveness, efficiency and speed; and that's governed by, as Ryan and I talked, the size of the pipe so to speak so that we can become faster and better service. I think what I recognized in talking, we had our Mayors' meeting again this morning, and some people were getting kicked off. It was inefficient for some of these communities. So, there are a number of areas.

The third area, the major area would be what's the City's role going to be in this? We want to be responsible, we want to own it. We want to charge. Do we want to take responsibility to a certain extent or do we want to keep paying a third party and be involved with a third party?

So, those are probably the three areas that we as our Administration looks at, access, speed and our participation; and Ryan can get into more of the details, but the goal of this is really just to expose the opportunity and figure out how we want to navigate through this. Ryan's talked about, we have several consultants we are going to look at. We may have something if it meets Council's approval for the meeting. We are going to try to get something together so that we can quickly determine again what we need to do to make sure that we are prepared for full service in those main arteries that I talked about earlier.

We will also have to determine the size of the pipe. So, what do we have to do to be fully functional, have the speed that we need to have to be sustainable over a long period of time?

Then the third area would be do we want to participate in owning part of our utilities, and then putting in an investment along with grants and some of this money because we are the first hub south of Cleveland; and in this greater metropolitan area this may be another opportunity for us to be involved to make sure there is stability with our business community, to make sure there's access to our residential community and make sure that there's good speed throughout our community so that we are not having challenges that all of us experience with some of our current providers or lack of providers.

So, that's an overall flavor of where we are at, and Ryan if you want to add something, you are the one who educates everybody.

Ryan Prosser said yes Mayor, thank you. Just to build upon that summary from the Mayor, when I look at this brief analysis of our broadband stature as a community considering the City Government buildings, the campus, the schools, the businesses, the residents; I think overall we have a good level of access today. Most everywhere throughout the City we have access to the broadband, but looking at this on a scale like the scales of justice with access being on one end and balancing with quality on the other; I think the room for improvement for us is the quality of the broadband. So, we have the ability to go out and purchase cable internet from a third party company, and they have the ability to charge what they will. They have the ability to throttle your data. They have the ability to sell your data, and the quality of the connection, the bandwidth, the capacity may not be as well as it could be for us.

So, some ways to improve that quality would be to provide a fiber connection straight to the home; so you have the ability to buy a high speed internet connection from a cable company today, but if you had a fiber connection, you would have almost unlimited in today's terms

speeds moving up and moving down. So, when you are connected to a video call, you are doing a telehealth with your doctor, you have home automation going on, your garage door is connected, your light bulbs are connected. All those things are connected, it's just going to be a higher demand for bandwidth moving forward. So, I think that although we do have fiber moving across our City campus between our Government buildings, we are actually working with a contractor right now to improve that connectivity; we are lacking in that we don't have fiber to the home. We don't have fiber moving north of Rockside on 21 to Rockside Woods Blvd. to Granger, get those connected. We have some fiber moving south and east on Pleasant Valley, but it would be nice to perhaps have an organization come in and help us do an overall assessment of what are capabilities are and how we can position ourselves to be stronger and improve our broadband connectivity on the quality.

I invited Chris Kirkpatrick from CR Action Cable. He has experience in deploying fiber networks for municipalities. He has some experience in seeing what companies such as Fairlawn did. I invite him to provide his insight on this topic as well.

Economic Development Director Hyser said hey Ryan before we switch over to him, is there a way that I can show the fiber map that I have here, that might be helpful for the conversation.

Mr. Prosser said if it has complete and up-to-date information, and we can kind of analyze it; I think that would be great.

Economic Development Director Hyser said so I just want to say this with a caveat here, so the fiber maps that I am providing here is Everstream. Everstream is one provider. After 9/11, getting access to some of this data has become challenging because of national security concerns. So, Everstream provides this fiber network map, and it will show you here the City of Independence where that fiber is located. So, off of I-77, and it goes all the way down Pleasant Valley Road, even when it switches to Alexander; this is obviously our industrial park. Those establishments have access. You see the fiber line going into the City campus as well as down Brecksville Road and serving the many businesses that are along the Rockside corridor.

There's been a lot of work over the last few years to expand this. As many of you might remember, I am going from the facts that I have been left from Jeremy; but in 2015 the City partnered with OneCommunity which is now Everstream to expand some of this fiber network along Rockside into a little bit further deeper into the park. So, I just wanted to make sure that you guys had the opportunity to see this, and this is Everstream's platform.

I am not sure if this is helpful as well, does this click over when I switch; but this will give you kind of an idea of who the providers are in that area. AT&T provides speeds up to 1 gig. This is based on zip code so it does pull in the service providers in Seven Hills which would be Cox. Spectrum, they are close to the 1 gig but not quite, and WOW also does provide a 1 gig service here in the City of Independence. I will note that they have Viasat on here which is a satellite provider. They actually have their offices here located in Independence.

So, I just wanted to frame the discussion with the map so that you guys can see where this connectivity can lead and understand the services and what's available here in the City.

Chairman Trakas said very helpful, thanks Jessica. Before we go to the next one, just out of curiosity Jessica, has 5G or connectivity been an issue for our business community? Has it been raised with you and what types of issues do we have?

Economic Development Director Hyser said it hasn't been raised as an issue. What comes up, and this is again from the notes that I am finding from Jeremy is about cost. This isn't anything that is unique to the City of Independence. Again, this is going back to my previous experience, it wasn't an issue of fiber not being available, it's what people want to pay for that fiber; and so exploring kind of the options around the public utility and maybe Mr. Kirkpatrick will get to this. My previous employer, we looked at the possibility of establishing a municipal fiber network, but it became really cost-prohibitive given that community's scale and the amount of resources after a short period of time that would have been required to reinvest into that system.

The issue is again the fact that there are multiple players and adding in a municipality, it is a way to either change that cost structure.

Chairman Trakas said thank you. Mr. Kirkpatrick, do you want to weigh in? Good afternoon and welcome to the committee.

Mr. Kirkpatrick replied good afternoon.

Chairman Trakas asked can we have your name and the name of your company just for record, we try to do that for all guests who don't work for the City.

Mr. Kirkpatrick replied my name is Christopher Kirkpatrick. The company is CR Action Cable, Inc. We have been in business for 26 years. We specialize in telecommunication building. We are out of a town pretty far away from you. We are in Deerfield, Ohio, and currently we are working on some of your infrastructure within your municipality building upgrading the fiber from multi-mode to a single-mode fiber.

I know we have done some work for other municipalities second-hand for Fairlawn Gig; they have their own municipality fiber network, and their concerns were the same as yours. They have Spectrum, AT&T, I am sure MCI is starting to fire up their network down there. They were worried that they weren't going to be able to be competitive and gain a market stability with the community because of so many different resources for internet which upon building their network they came to realize that there is a growing demand for broadband; and some of these companies just cannot provide the access at the cost affordability that the municipality can do.

They offer WiFi service in Fairlawn along all of your parks and walkways so that if you purchase internet through Fairlawn you also have the ability to connect to your cell phone while you are out walking and doing your daily activities to still open your broadband experience up to its full capacity instead of being throttled back by Spectrum or AT&T or some of these other networks.

Chairman Trakas asked can you explain throttling? I know Ryan brought that up as well, and not everybody is familiar with what you are referring to.

Mr. Kirkpatrick said throttling is once you reach a certain amount of bandwidth of megabytes up and down, you consume so much information; they start to slow your speed so that you cannot gain access as easy as before. So, everybody knows the great wheel of death when you are trying to download or something from one server to another, there's a little wheel that seems to drag on and on and on. What that is, they throttle your service back so you are not downloading as fast and streaming like you should. A lot of times at the beginning of the month with your cell phone service, you open broadband so you are able to download really fast; and then as you consume, they start to slow you down so you don't over-consume. So throttling back is their way of limiting your ability to go over what they allot you for your dollar amount.

Chairman Trakas said thank you.

Mayor Kurtz asked any way around that?

Mr. Kirkpatrick said if there is a way, I'm not privileged to that information because I experience the same thing that everybody else does. My cell phone, unfortunately being a corporate phone, it uses a lot of data; and boy at the end of the month we sure see the impact. I have asked them numerous times, you tell me this is an unlimited service; but yet you throttle back, and they go that's part of the purchase agreement is we offer you, even though it is unlimited, it's still a limited amount.

Mayor Kurtz said Chris you mentioned Fairlawn. Do you have experience with that installation and package or not?

Mr. Kirkpatrick said we actually built a lot of their infrastructure for them through another party. We built underground and aerial plants for them. Their accessibility is phenomenal. They are called Fairlawn Gig, and that's because they offer a gig service; and to the best of my knowledge, they do not throttle back their service. You have a free flowing internet. The City maintains it. They operate it. They do all the billing. They do everything. They use a certain party for maintenance in case there is a major cut or something, they call in another contractor to come in and do the repairs at their facilities and get it back up and running.

Presently, I know they are working with the City of Tallmadge to get their infrastructure up and running to get fiber to the home for them. They are quite successful. I know Fairlawn Gig, their saturation is growing every day. When we built the plant, they were afraid there wouldn't be a great saturation of customers, and within a month or so of opening up the program, other people were through word of mouth, it flew off the handle. They were pushing us to get more and more of the plant active because people were wanting to join because it was so great and reliable.

Mayor Kurtz asked is the cost when they built it, is it based on the size of the community, the acreage or is it based on other aspects?

Mr. Kirkpatrick said most of your costs will be with what distances you are going to run, how much fiber you really need to place. You are going to run into modems that you are going to have to supply; and most of that you can get Government funding for. I was under the

impression when we were working with them that Fairlawn Gig got the majority of their funding from the Government.

Mayor Kurtz said Independence Gig here we come.

Mr. Kirkpatrick said Independence Gig, Independence Freedom. There are several ways you can market this, and I believe that you can become competitive. You will bring the other markets' prices down because everybody knows when there is an open market, people tend to lower their rates to make sure that they are still competitive in getting a share of the business.

Chairman Trakas said obviously with many people working from home, many people having businesses from home and running businesses from home and internet businesses from home, as well as all the work that we have on Brecksville, Rockside and East Pleasant Valley, so if you wanted to get structured every home and every new home that's built for fiber, what are we talking about? What does that cost per home or estimate? What type of idea do you have?

Mr. Kirkpatrick said I can't give you a dollar figure right now. We can do a cost analysis. I can get with another firm that they go through and market how. It's going to dictate how spread apart the homes are, how congested your area is. The more congested it is, the closer the homes are, the less dollar factor you are going to have. So, this is why there is no high speed internet for rural right now because it just costs too much money to build fiber 5 miles to a gentleman's home as to with a city you are building 150 feet or 200 feet, and you are picking up a customer every 200 feet. So, when you are building 5 miles to catch one guy that's going to pay you \$70 a month, it's just not economical to put that out there. So, that's where the Government is stepping in, and they are offering a lot of funds for the rural part because the Government believes that everybody should have access to high speed internet, and they should. So, they are allocating funds so that everyone has the same experience on the internet and not this guy has 100 gig service or 100 meg, and I'm getting 5. It doesn't seem fair.

Mayor Kurtz said if it costs us \$10,000,000 or \$15,000,000 or something, then you make a business deal out of it. It's not far-fetched when you start thinking of where everything is headed, and the impact it could have on our business community, let alone the convenience of our residents. It could be a feature for attracting residents too.

Mr. Kirkpatrick replied correct.

Chairman Trakas said I was thinking the same thing Mayor, and you have from a business perspective, if you control those costs; that is a huge cost if someone is thinking about locating a business here versus anywhere else. If you could maintain those costs and lower the costs of high speed. The Independence Liberty network.

Mr. Kirkpatrick said there you go. We could move forward with getting, I can get with a couple of my contacts, we can move forward, looking into what it would cost per mile. I am not sure which direction you want to go, if you were looking to build an aerial plant or if you guys have a lot of newer subdivisions where that's not possible.

Mayor Kurtz said it would be a combination.

Mr. Kirkpatrick said because you are going to, on your aerial plan you are going to pay a monthly fee to be attached to the telephone poles. Ohio Edison, AT&T, they all charge Charter, Spectrum, Cox, they all charge them an attachment fee every month. I am not sure what that fee is; so I know Fairlawn a lot of their plant is underground because they own the right-of-way, so they just bury a pipe, pull the fiber through the pipe, set a pad up. Then when they feed the service, they just place an underground drop and hook the customer up. Then there is no monthly fee.

Mayor Kurtz said segments of the community are already underground when we upgraded Brecksville Road and our campus and Rockside Road. As we make improvements going north, we would add that underground segment going north. Don, when we upgraded the section where Topgolf is, did we accommodate for that?

City Engineer Ramm said Rockside Woods Blvd. North we have numerous conduits running up and down that, all the way out to 21 from our new road.

Mayor Kurtz asked what about 21?

City Engineer Ramm said 21 itself, I will have to double-check that whether or not we put conduits in with the street lighting that went in up and down.

Mayor Kurtz said make sure we incorporate, when we do the next phase, is north or south of that, would you please?

City Engineer Ramm replied yes.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you.

Chairman Trakas asked Council do you have any questions for Mr. Kirkpatrick?

Councilperson Synek said so it sounds like the business model of this is whoever installs the cable owns that cable, and then has the right to sell it to customers. Does Everstream own all that cable that's underneath there? If we got into this business, would we be sharing cable with Everstream? How exactly does it work?

Mr. Kirkpatrick said if you are wanting to use a fiber from Everstream for transportation, you would have to contact them and ask them if you could lease a fiber from them. You would not own the fiber, you would lease that fiber.

Now I know with Everstream, they do not do any residential service at all. Everstream is business class fiber only and cell tower fiber. So, you could lease some just for your transportation point of it, you know what I'm saying? You wouldn't be able to take their fiber and branch it off and make it a residential fiber. You would have to place your own network for the residential area. If Everstream built the fiber through your town, they own that fiber.

Mayor Kurtz said so we have extra conduit Don, we put our own conduit system in on Brecksville Road going south to our campus and on Rockside Road we still have capacity.

City Engineer Ramm said Mayor I know we put that conduit in, I thought it was a 6 inch or 5 or 6 inch on the west side of Brecksville from the campus all the way down to 21. That still have capacity in it. I don't know that we have anything north of Rockside.

Mayor Kurtz said I know we don't north, but you are going to make sure when we do that road, build that into your plans if you would please; and I know we put a number of different banks of conduit in on Rockside Road when we upgraded that.

Mr. Kirkpatrick asked now when you say you put in conduit, did you put in just a straight run of conduit where there's no, you are going to have to have access point to be able to provide service to these homes. So, if you have one straight piece of conduit that's a solid sheet all the way from the campus to say Rockside Road, and it's all one solid piece; you have no way to access that fiber to warrant customers to join on to that fiber network. What we do is we go in, and we place conduit; but every so often you can usually get 4 homes off of each fiber network head. So, after you pass 4 homes, you need to riser back up again so that we can place an access point for your drops to connect to warrant service for that (inaudible).

Mayor Kurtz said I know we have riser heads on Rockside. We put the boxes in when we put the bank of conduit in. I'm not sure about Brecksville Road.

Chairman Trakas said I think we do have some points Mayor. I think I remember that conversation, the same thing on Pleasant Valley.

Mr. Kirkpatrick said we do what we call, we have a retrieval system where we go in, and if it's a 4 inch piece of pipe, we can shave a hole into the side of the pipe; and we offer what we call a saddle that goes over top of that hole, and it's glued and banded. Then we take a 2 inch conduit from there and bring it to the surface. Then we put a rope through there; so if we were going to build a network, set a cabinet up with a splice point in it, and then we would pull the service cables from that. We could open sections of that conduit to grant access to the network.

Mayor Kurtz said you are a wealth of knowledge, and I appreciate that. We all appreciate the education, but you are also outlining some of the opportunities we have because we positioned ourselves. We have 9 square miles so it's not as though it's an overwhelming size. We don't use half of that anyways. It's just something that we really have to research.

Mr. Kirkpatrick said right, and we can give you some of the knowledge. I can get some stuff put together, tell you how much gigabyte service you are going to need, what's the best route to go, who are the providers out there that have the most reliability and the greatest speed for your service. Pretty much Fairlawn Gig has done all of their research, and they are up and running; and they are making money. They are making money so well that the neighboring municipalities are looking at them to help them grow their network.

Mayor Kurtz said we are going to be in the utility business.

Mr. Kirkpatrick said and the nice thing is you are going to be in the utility business, but you are also going to be improving the homeowners' property, the value of their property. The value of the city will go up, and the demand for people to come to your city to live in will increase as well because you won't believe how fast the news travels that this is a great place to live. There's great opportunity for internet speeds and running a business out of your home with all the stuff that's gone on in the last year or year and a half, a lot of people are working from home right now. The problem that they are finding is there's not enough bandwidth out there for them to work diligently from home. They are still having to go to the office and get stuff because the information is too great to try to download; so they still have to go back and get information from their office.

If you get a 1 gig service, a true fiber internet service, the speed is the speed of light. It all rides on a laser. So, as fast as that light moves, that's how fast the information moves; and if you aren't throttling it back, it's quick.

Mayor Kurtz asked would that be what you would recommend in terms of today if we look to the future, is there a goal out there we should establish in terms of expectations for future needs?

Mr. Kirkpatrick said fiber is the wave of the future. Fiber optic network is never going to go away. The dying breed in this information is the coax service. If you do any research, and you talk with anybody from Spectrum or any of the cable TV service providers, they wish they didn't provide cable TV service. They wished they only provided broadband service, and it's getting to that point where the cable TV service end of it is going to go just selling broadband. So, they are no longer going to run television over a wire; they are going to offer you so much bandwidth, and you are going to stream all of your television. You are going to pick what you want to watch through your streaming programs. There's already a big thing with Paramount and all of the networks that are providing these, they are forming companies just for streaming. The latest and greatest one that I know of is the Discovery Plus. You buy a section of our network through a streaming source, and we provide you with these 5 or 6 channels of Discovery; and our services stream through that service. So, you no longer need to have a cable TV connection. If you have an internet connection, you can watch any program broadcast across the world.

Mayor Kurtz asked do they throttle that back too?

Mr. Kirkpatrick said Discovery will not throttle their stuff back. These individuals, they are pushing for the broadband service because you are going to only order, say you only need 5 megabytes of broadband; you don't need 1,000 gig to get into being able to stream their TV. So, they sell these blocks, you buy a certain amount, and it's free flowing for the television. Now if you got on there just to do your internet, then yes they would throttle it back. Now if you are using a company that throttles internet back, say you are using Spectrum or whatever, it takes a lot of information to get your TV. So, if you are using a whole lot, eventually your TV is going to slow. Your stream will slow down. It's the same thing as, everybody is familiar with Netflix. So, when you download a movie from Netflix, and you are downloading it over the internet, sometimes if you are on a 5 meg download thing, the movie will stop; and you will get the little bar across the bottom, and the bar will move. When the bar gets so far ahead, the movie will

resume; and it will start to play. It's because the speed is not there in which the television is working faster than you are gathering the information.

Mr. Prosser said one point that you brought up in the attractiveness, it's something that really peaks my interest because in the information technology field IT guys, if you want to attract these people to the community that work for Google, that work for NASA, that are really at the top tier of data architecture, now they are working from home, and they are expected to have, not only 1,000 megabytes download, but they are expected to have 1,000 megabytes upload. They have to send the data up there; those are the numbers that AT&T and Cox Cable, they don't show you, they just show you the front end. Like you said, all that's throttled, and having that network in our municipality brings that attractiveness to bring in the technology minded folks into our area.

Mr. Kirkpatrick said correct. They are only telling you what you are receiving. They don't tell you what upload and download. They show you that this is your upload, this is your download speed; and if you look at them, they may say they are giving you 1,000 megabytes per second. On the reverse end where you are transmitting out, you are only getting 20 or 30 meg. That's if you are lucky.

Mayor Kurtz said Chris let me ask you a question. Do you think satellite will impact?

Mr. Kirkpatrick said right now from what I am hearing in the industry, the Government is wanting to get as many satellites out in the air as possible. They are already trying to build networks, satellite, dishes onto towers to get rid of. There is too much junk in space, and unfortunately they are just putting more and more up there. The more that they get up there, the less room there is for the Government's networks, their spy satellites, their information gathering satellites. So, they are wanting to get the broadband satellites back down out of the orbit so that they are not jamming their air spaces. So, I know they are moving, there are a lot of networks right now that they are building systems back on earth through towers to provide that service so that they are no longer broadcasting from space.

If you ever dealt with HughesNet or some of these other, I think Jessica showed a company called Viasat that is an internet based company that works off of satellite; and if you look at their star rating, their reviews and the amount of information, megabytes per second that they offer, I think it was 25 if I'm not mistaken. It was the worst of everything that was on the screen, and when you look at the dollar amount for it. We have built networks, there is a little town that we built a network in, New Harrisburg, Ohio; they were going to tear the cable system down, and they decided to upgrade it because the Government wouldn't let them. It was basically internet to a rural system, so we upgraded it so that it would work, and you won't believe how many people kept coming up to me going man when I can get rid of HughesNet. It is a \$167 a month, and it's slower than snail mail. It's stone age internet compared to what you would be offering. It's so slow, it's ridiculous, and they are charging an astronomical amount of money because these folks can't get internet any other way.

Mayor Kurtz said so Chris, we can coordinate with you to help us develop a strategy and plan that fits the needs, both today and tomorrow for our community. Then between you and Ryan,

we can put something together to figure out the next step. We can then call another Utilities meeting or Council as a whole. This is a big deal.

Mr. Kirkpatrick said it's a big revenue generating service that you would be providing to your customers, to your citizens, and I think it's the wave of the future. I am trying to get a municipality down here in Alliance where I live, I am trying to get them to do it because the cable systems are so saturated with network gear that the internet is slow, and it's not dependable. There's times, I have a young teenager that lives at home, and everybody knows the wave of the future with the teenagers is gaming; and Spectrum doesn't have the speeds for gaming. My stepson comes out all the time going hey Spectrum is pausing, it's down. We need to reset the modem, we need to do this. You won't believe how much frustration you will alleviate from parents in your community when they no longer have their 16 year-old child coming out and going Dad what's going on with the internet. Why is this thing lagging?

Mayor Kurtz said Mr. Chairman, so I propose that we have Ryan and Jessica because she's familiar with putting this together, get with Chris and whoever else we need to packet something up that we can keep moving the ball forward. It's going to take some time and energy and resources, but I guess my point was that I think we ought to just move the ball forward if it's okay with Council.

Councilperson Synek said absolutely.

Mayor Kurtz asked does anybody object on Council to at least put our toe in the water and see what we can come up with?

Councilperson Synek said and Mayor I would just add to that list of to do things, you just have to make a connection with the powers that be in Fairlawn, whoever it is in their city Government to help.

Mayor Kurtz said I know the Mayor that worked on that at the time, and then Jess has had some exposure to that in her previous position. So, between Ryan and Jess, we will circle the wagons; and Chris will be our consultant.

Chairman Trakas said I would also just say Mayor that it also might make sense to loop in the schools and their IT Department to see if there's some synergy there; and also maybe as part of this, just leverage what does the private sector offer as well. I know the municipality might be a utility here, but let's just see what they might be able to do as well. They have the expertise, and we should probably just find out. It doesn't hurt to ask. I know when we talked about First Energy and had a competitive situation on their energy rates, they were able to do some things that benefits us thanks to your leadership there. So, I think we should at least have those discussions with the private sector folks as well.

Mayor Kurtz said absolutely.

Economic Development Director Hyser said that was a great experience from my past experience with broadband, both AT&T and Spectrum to have those conversations, and it was helpful in moving the ball forward.

Chairman Trakas said when they hear you might create a municipal utility, they suddenly get sharp pencils don't they?

Economic Development Director Hyser said they seem to.

Mayor Kurtz asked Chris can we work with Ryan and you, and we will keep this ball in the air, how's that?

Mr. Kirkpatrick said it sounds good to me.

Finance Director Blaze said this is excellent timing because as we talked about on Tuesday at the Council Workshop, in the infrastructure category that is an allowable use for the funding that will be forthcoming from the Federal Government, within infrastructure, broadband is one of those allowable categories, so, a very timely discussion here this afternoon.

Chairman Trakas said thanks for the recommendations. Thank you for everything. Anything else on Item 3, Broadband?

Thank you for that really vibrant discussion. This is exciting, and as the Director of Finance said very timely.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you Chris. Thank you Ryan, nice job.

Mr. Prosser said thank you Mayor.

Chairman Trakas said go back to whatever emergencies have developed in the last 49 minutes.

Mayor Kurtz asked me too?

Chairman Trakas said go.

Speaking of emergencies, Item Number 1, Stormwater Utility and Sewer Projects, poor Don Ramm who doesn't sleep well these days, probably ever; but Don thanks for joining us.

Mayor Kurtz asked Mr. Chairman can he do the wrap of the status of the 2020 projects? Don, would that be easier to go backwards, and then we can go forward?

City Engineer Ramm said I would appreciate that Mayor, thank you.

Mayor Kurtz asked if it's okay Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Trakas said absolutely, go ahead Don the floor is yours.

City Engineer Ramm said let me pull up some information.

The wrap up and the status of 2020, I am going to try to fly through this, a lot of these you have heard before in review. You stop me if you have any questions as we move forward.

This is more of a maintenance category of the things we were focusing on in 2020, Patriot's Way emergency culvert. We spent \$80,000, and \$46,000 of which, almost \$47,000 was reimbursable.

Valley Woods headwall and overflow, we will show some photos of a lot of these going forward; but we are up to about \$17,000 there. We are about done with that project for what we were looking to get done here in the short term.

4902 Pleasant Valley Road was the culvert under a driveway on private property. That was the public partnership project, and that one is almost complete.

Then of course the slope repair by CSA. You have seen a lot of these photos for Patriot's Way. It turned out very nice, and I am glad we did it for the storms and the water that had to flow through there today. I am sure there were no problems.

Here is the Valley Woods project, and you recall last fall we tried to make some improvements, but the weather turned; and we put a better use of a structure and put a cage on it. Also, we put a debris deflector and cage that made it hydraulically much more less prone to clogging and catching the debris. We were back at it here just several weeks ago. We did the final grading and seeding, and this is literally just a day or two ago of what it looked like. The thing to focus on here, so the goal is that once if this headwall gets submerged, and it will spill then to the next device and cage. We have a flood berm back here that is every bit of a foot to two foot higher than the top of this structure so that it will help just store the water locally in this ravine area before it would have a chance to top over and flow downstream where it really causes havoc to the backyards of the downstream properties. We feel this is going to be a nice improvement with the levels of redundancy that will allow us time to clean things out after severe storms without catastrophic effects. We will know it soon enough.

Councilperson Synek asked do you design that sort of thing yourself? Who is the consultant that helps you come up with that sort of solution?

City Engineer Ramm said well we engaged, a little bit of both. So, we have known for years what we have had to work with back there, and we always had a manhole that really wasn't doing much for us with a solid cover. It was quite easy to just retrofit it with opening up, pulling off the top altogether and putting on a cage. It really takes better advantage of a full four foot diameter structure that would really swallow the water that makes its way to it. Just with our experience over time of trying to mitigate some of these conditions, but ultimately in the global sense and perspective we tried to engage a consultant to look at maybe the long term solution. We had always talked about potential for detention basins upstream of the steep ravine there. That's kind of exactly what they represented here, and there are challenges of course with private property and CEI easements that run back through here. This would be an alternate pond location that's on private property.

So, there's things that can be done just costly and time-consuming and expensive, and on private property.

Finance Director Blaze said Don it's a good map if you could leave that up for one more second and take your cursor, and at the top of Valley Woods there's the two homes on the cul-de-sac. Then if you move your screen to the property to the south, that rectangular piece that your hand is on. The City just took title to this one. We got it back in a tax foreclosure suit. So, the piece where part of your detention basin is shown, go to the left, the rectangular piece south of the two at the end of the cul-de-sac, that piece right there. The City just took title to that. So, any work, I see part of a possible solution to what you are talking about incorporates this property, so that's one less property owner we have to deal with to either pay to acquire an easement or negotiate something. So, we have that piece.

City Engineer Ramm said good to know, and I do remember seeing that email Vern. I didn't realize this was one of the properties.

Councilperson Synek asked Vern is that because the property owner wasn't paying their taxes? How did that come to be?

Finance Director Blaze said generally so Councilperson. We get it through the County, and it has something to do with the foreclosure land being processed. These are generally not regular mortgage foreclosures as you asked. They are generally tax foreclosures, and they are just funky properties. As you can see, this one is a landlocked piece. It might be under one of the tower lines there; so there's an easement overhead. It has no value, and I assume the previous owner just paying taxes on it and let it go. Before the County puts it in the Land Bank, they contact local municipalities to see if we have any interest in it. I conferred with the Mayor and Economic Development Director, and the collective decision was made. If it's being offered to us for nothing, we will take it. We could always use it for something, and within 2 or 3 weeks of when that transaction just closed, here's Engineer Ramm showing that it's a potential site for a stormwater remediation project. So, I am glad we got title to that property.

City Engineer Ramm said I do believe that when we talked about this at one of the prior meetings, we talked about the raw undeveloped land back here, and that in many instances residential subdivision development would in essence be required to build stormwater management facilities that I think would also, it would be a net benefit to the downstream properties, if and when that ever occurred. So, something to think about; I don't know of any plans pending. That land has been sitting vacant for some time; so it's maybe less likely. I'm just putting it out there.

Mayor Kurtz said we should look at it as if it's going to be fully developed Don.

City Engineer Ramm said okay.

If there's nothing more on this, I will move on to the culvert on 4902 Pleasant Valley. That Petition for Assessment was upwards a little over \$64,000. There were very bad conditions that have been remedied with new pipe and outlet protection. That work was also done in the fall,

and we put up some safety improvements. The concrete did get damaged in some areas, and that work is being scheduled to be performed this spring or early summer. The homeowner is doing some asphalt pavement resurfacing work here in the next week or two with a separate contractor on his own closer to his house. Once that work is completed, I do believe our intent is to then come back and address the concrete issues that need to be taken care of. That project should be wrapping up, and all the costs finalized here in the coming months.

Here's the CSA. This was the soil nail wall, slope repair project. It was kind of neat how they constructed it in phases. They did a top layer first, shock treated it in, and then worked their way down. You can see some of the anchors that were drilled down back into the slope; and ultimately those get cut off. Then the shock treat gets put over it, and that cost was over \$115,000; and this is a finished product as they were backfilling and doing the final grading. It was wintertime so the grass has yet to get established; but that work is complete. CSA has been active in working on their side of things for the slope repair and culvert issues that they had back on their property.

Moving along, that was more the maintenance activities with our maintenance contracts. Now this is kind of a summary of the water main and storm sewer improvements. I wrote 2019 because some of these projects were carry overs from 2019 and are still actually being carried over even in the spring with some landscaping work and some punch list items. What I tried to do here is just show you the amounts of new footage of pipe, both storm and water main utilities and the respective costs from the project. It was significant. The one here with the asterisk, that was the \$1,300,000. We did request Northeast Regional for cost share funding for that, and we are approved; but of course, we only receive about \$190,000 to \$200,000 per year. So, we have this money kind of earmarked; and we make reimbursements as our account accrues funding such that we can get it on somewhat of a regular basis. So, it was a lot of good work, a lot of good new pipes and infrastructure with these projects. That wraps up the 2020. If there are no questions, we can transition to 2021.

Chairman Trakas asked Don just curious, have you noticed a difference in Lafayette? Obviously, we used to have quite a bit of problems in that neighborhood. Have you gotten any concerns since we have installed those?

City Engineer Ramm said no, and we still have to get accomplished that rear yard project. We meant to get it done over the winter, and I was tied up with other things and couldn't get that organized. So, we still do have it on our radar and will try to get that done here when the weather turns warm and the ground hardens up. That is the section between Latonia and Waldorf, that section of Lafayette rear yards there. That is still on our docket. So, that footage will increase.

Mayor Kurtz said on some of these projects, on that job we just witnessed. I guess my question is would there ever be a cost savings to the City to utilize some of our excess organic material that they are using on all of these projects in the City? Council, would you want us to look and see if we could save some money using our excess material?

Chairman Trakas said I would say yes. Anyone else?

Mayor Kurtz said when I looked at those pictures, and you know what when we have material that saves us line item costs; we ought to think about it.

Chairman Trakas said absolutely.

Mayor Kurtz said Don why don't you look into that so if it makes some sense, it could save us some money.

City Engineer Ramm said sure Mayor, especially with all the landscaping work that's going to be going on with the tree (inaudible).

Mayor Kurtz said we have it.

City Engineer Ramm said moving along to the 2021 stormwater. This also we have kind of broken down into some projects that got out of the gate early this year, and that being the Hillside Road sidewalk and drainage improvements east. DiGioia Suburban did install about 1,600 feet of pipe already, and that work is complete. So, these are costs that were actually on the first invoice, \$131,000, nearly \$132,000 for that storm sewer. Those costs, keep in mind, the costs include catch basins and some of the ancillary work, not just the footage of pipe. What these numbers here show is that it's a percentage of the cost of the overall project, just to give you a flavor for what the storm sewers and drainage improvements represent on any one of these projects.

Upper Brookside Phase 2, that is Fabrizi's project that not too long ago they completed all the underground work and started ripping out the actual road for paving. So again, this is completed work, and also did get invoiced here recently.

This is the upcoming project that we are finalizing plans for and hope to get out to bid and construct this summer, another 1,000 feet of storm sewer improvements for Hillside on the west side, the west end of Hillside Road and the respective costs.

So, those are active and/or upcoming projects, and then if there's no questions here we can transition to some of the more global projects that have been on our document; and I am referring back to the Five-Year Plan, some different versions of it where we found it appropriate based on some times and names of the projects may have changed or the funding designation years may have changed.

There's Brecksville Road by AAA where the road came out and spliced that out, but now we have to circle back; and we talked about that earlier here today with a meeting on the fiber. As the Mayor mentioned to me earlier now that the job is split with that intersection by AAA, and with ODOT getting ready to do their bridge over I-480, that job is coming. The job is already kind of set up now to be in segments, one north of I-480 and one south of our intersection work. That's okay. E.L. Robinson was the engineer of record that was hired for the design of the entire length, and we have discussed with them making sure they understand to design it in such a way or have the bid documents will be in a way we can part the contract out when it makes most sense to construct it.

So, Brecksville Road from Rockside Road to the southerly limit of where our current project terminated will probably go first and will be in concert probably with the bridge work, not necessarily coordinate it; but just because they might fall calendar wise and make most sense. There is a nice separation now that we have done a couple thousand feet of the road there. There is a natural break point and a separation there that we shouldn't be working over top of each other and can both be making progress on our respective projects on the same calendar. So, that's all this project is meant to represent; it's going to be more water main and more storm sewer work with components of the street lighting and sidewalk improvements.

Mayor Kurtz asked and what else Don?

City Engineer Ramm said and conduit.

Mayor Kurtz said there you go. He's quick.

Along that line ladies and gentlemen, the Police are looking into traffic management. The trucks are starting to use the inside lane more; and we are going to start monitoring that from a safety standpoint. It's been brought to my attention by some of the residents and some of the people going through there, those big trucks that aren't using the curb lane. The lanes are so narrow, we are going to start slowing them down and making sure they use the curb lanes.

Chairman Trakas asked is that something we can do Mayor? Do you want to put signage up that requests them to do that?

Mayor Kurtz said thank you Chairman Trakas, we will do that today.

Chairman Trakas said that might help out.

Finance Director Blaze said Mr. Chairman, that page that Don has up from the 2019-2023 Five-Year Capital Plan, of course now we are working on the 2021-2025 Capital Plan; and just so Council is aware, even though we are under the Agenda Item 2021 Stormwater Utility and Sewer Projects, just be aware that in the current Five-Year Capital Plan, most of the construction funding that this plan shows being allocated in 2020, 2021 and 2022 is now being allocated in 2023 and 2024. So, if that's a timing problem for Council, the Mayor's office or Engineering, that will warrant further discussion. If it's all agreed by all parties that this isn't going to take place for a couple of years, then the current way that it's configured is satisfactory I would assume.

Mayor Kurtz said I would like to get this going as quickly as we can.

City Engineer Ramm said and Mayor and members of committee and guests, we are moving forward on the engineering; and we do have utility relocations and some right-of-way work that we are making good progress on. At the earliest, we might be ready to construct would be late this year or 2022 for the segments, the southerly piece. We will know better as time evolves here; but it's not going to hurt that 2022 could be the earliest; but to the Mayor's point, we will know better as we are going forward and would like to get moving on this quickly since it's been

on the docket for some time. With the Topgolf and with the new road, we did sort of split things out. It was meant to be a large holistic project from some years ago.

Chairman Trakas said and Don I didn't want to steal your thunder, but we are still talking about also doing Kleber Court and Longano Drive along the same, is this part of the same project or is that separate?

City Engineer Ramm said that's the next slide or two.

Chairman Trakas said thanks, sorry about that.

City Engineer Ramm said a separate project, but very integral to each other and married of course because of their location.

Moving on, this Brookside Road, I had thought that we had talked about not this year of course, but with the beating that it's taking, and with the construction that's been going all the way around it, that Brookside, the central section from Eastview to Brecksville Road, potentially could be raised to more of a reconstruction, more of a larger project. So, in that event, there would be some major storm sewer upgrades and improvements that would be needed as we have done and as required on these other major reconstructions. So, the current Capital Plan, I think was from the current plan, Vern does that look accurate? This threw me a little bit because I thought towards the very end of the year as we were finalizing the plan, I thought we were talking \$1,000,000 or \$2,000,000, not for 2021 but out in 2022 but maybe with some design engineering getting started in 2021.

Finance Director Blaze said correct. This plan is from 2020, so it's a year old. It shows a \$350,000 rounded amount, but it doesn't show it being allocating; although that's already, that plan shows a P.O. for that amount. In the current plan, the 2021-2022 plan, you are correct. We do show engineering in 2021, and then about half of the project cost being appropriated this year, \$750,000. Then another \$750,000 in 2022; so right now that project Brookside Road, Eastview to Brecksville Road, has about \$180,000 allocated for engineering and \$1,500,000 for construction.

City Engineer Ramm said in 2022.

Finance Director Blaze said half this year and half in 2022.

City Engineer Ramm said okay.

Finance Director Blaze said I guess it's going to do one lane one year, and one lane the other year, right?

City Engineer Ramm said with construction yes.

That lines up with what my recollection was. I am not sure why we were gravitating to this older plan, but we will figure that out.

Then here's the Longano and Kleber, and I think very similarly these were earlier on in a prior version. They were going to be done a little bit sooner, but because of the work out there on 21 they have been pushed back. We certainly do want to get going with engineering this year and just need to try to dovetail it in with Kleber's work not being over top of the bridge work because that could be terribly cumbersome and congested, and maybe it would more sense with Longano when we are doing Brecksville Road by Cornerstone, south where our project terminated. So, we are still kind of working through those things, but they will get designed regardless.

Finance Director Blaze said that \$200,000 and \$3,000,000 are the exact numbers in the current plan, just as typical with a lot of our capital planning, they got moved to the right; and now the \$200,000 is shown this year in 2021, and the \$3,000,000 is shown next year in 2022.

City Engineer Ramm said and that still works nice I think. I don't think that's a problem at all. That again will be major reconstruction with water main improvements and storm sewers on both projects.

Mayor Kurtz said we did get an appraisal on that corner lot, that vacant lot; so that when we do Longano we can create some type of a modified boulevard entrance for aesthetics. We will put that together.

City Engineer Ramm said this project has been on our list for a number of years, it's the large culvert that pretty much takes the creek that flows and enters the pipe at the intersection at the south side of Hillside at Vineyard, that corrugated metal pipe that's in pretty poor condition. It would also include water main replacement on Hillside road. So, that's this large project. I do believe it also has slid. Is this an outdated placeholder as well Vern?

Finance Director Blaze said the \$2,800,000 is what we still worked with this year in 2021. We allocated \$300,000 for engineering this year, and then tucking away about \$1,000,000 of the construction costs this year; and then the additional \$1,500,000 of construction next year in 2022; so, \$2,500,000 construction, \$300,000 engineering total.

City Engineer Ramm said this is one that I think a number of times submitted to the OPWC for some funding because we thought it was very important project, and we were not selected. The project needs to be done, so we do have our hands full with some engineering work this year for 2022 construction.

Second Street is another one, a very small street; but poor water main, and the road is tired. The curb and gutters are in need of replacement. That will be a nice improvement to that neighborhood and make it look more similar to Sunset and Chestnut and Elmwood. I do believe the same thing, engineering in 2021 and construction in 2022 probably.

Chairman Trakas said it needs some love.

Finance Director Blaze said that one might take some further discussion because that really got pushed to the right. Now we are showing \$75,000 of engineering in 2023, and \$750,000 of construction and \$30,000 of inspection in 2024.

City Engineer Ramm said the water main shows up in poor condition on Cleveland Water Department's mapping and inventory; but I don't know that we have a significant amount of breaks there. Maybe over the years we have had higher rates than their average, but I don't recall a major issue there or water quality or health issues anywhere near there. So, I'm not saying it has to be, I just know that in prior versions it was shown to be earlier; and I need to get the current plan up on these slides.

That kind of concludes the 2021 work, a lot of projects in the pipeline.

Chairman Trakas said great. Any questions for Don on those? Don, you answered all the questions.

City Engineer Ramm said oh good.

Chairman Trakas said what about some of those, now those were some of the major projects; but we had talked quite a bit about some of those non-immediate priority, but visioning ideas about how to help some of our residents with some of the flooding problems. I know that there are several neighborhoods that have had issues that you have been working on. Do you want to have that at another meeting? Or do you have some of that available?

City Engineer Ramm said no, I do recall us talking about it at the Council Workshop; and I need to sit down with the Mayor and go over; but to your point, we had a number of alternate bids in neighborhoods that could really make nice improvements to whole sets of neighborhoods. They are larger ticket, larger dollar value projects that would maybe the public partnership would be a nice way to go.

Chairman Trakas said well if we could work on that in the future. I know that one who calls me rather frequently is Mr. Juliani at 6115 Chestnut. He's still concerned about water, and so he asked me to make sure that it got put on the agenda today. I thought we might want to do that, and then another question that came in which was from Terry on Sprague and its says how can Independence address and/or create an effective Five-Year Plan for stormwater issues when the City doesn't know where issues are coming from and some issues originate in adjacent cities and we don't really have a working relationship with them? This is obviously a really great question, do you have any thoughts on that?

City Engineer Ramm said we are aware of certainly the creek that plagues Kingscote is a watercourse that, years ago we did that Upper Brookside watershed study, and we identified a stormwater management basin in a corner of our neighboring adjacent community and thought that we could get some assistance with the Regional Sewer District, thinking that it was across corporate limits and would really help. We had little traction on that project for a lot of the same reasons; it's difficult, the corp. limits and private property. So, we have had little success there and with any traction. It's still on our radar though, and we learned something here today or have been dealing with the intersection of Sprague and Skyline Drive. There are some drainage issues that get exacerbated when this kind of rainfall falls, and water from one side of the street migrates over and exacerbates conditions on our side. So, we definitely will reach out to the

Service Director there and see if we can't make some maintenance updates to try to better manage the water and minimize the episodes where it really causes problems for us.

Chairman Trakas said I know we had talked one time about maybe trying to coordinate Broadview Heights and Seven Hills, particularly the water that comes down Sprague Road that way. So, if the Northern Ohio Regional Sewer District isn't going to really participate in that. It was always kind of a maybe as it was; maybe we can coordinate that with those communities and put together a plan and see if we can all share in something. That would alleviate quite a few of the problems that comes in all the way down and goes quite some way. So, that's another one I would put on the radar screen that maybe a little bit longer term; but see if we could get those other communities to work with us on it and come up with a plan.

I know that you had said that a retention basin in Broadview Heights was desirable. I don't know if they think so or not, but you are a pretty exceptional engineer; so I would hope that they would listen to you.

Does anyone else have anything else on this topic?

Councilperson Synek said Don if you are done sharing your screen, can you put us back? So, I just wanted to take a quick second and acknowledge Don Ramm. If there's anybody in the City that has a tougher job, maybe the Mayor has a little more on his plate; but Don you have more on your plate than anybody else and kudos to you for the way you handle everything as well as you do. Just seeing the scope and breath of the projects that are on your plate, do you have the resources that you need? I don't want or need you to work 7 days a week, you have a family that you have to be present for. Do you have all the resources you need to get done the things that you want to get done in a reasonable workload?

City Engineer Ramm said yes, well 2 things; we have access to a lot of consultants that we rely on; and I know Council and Mayor authorized some new hires in our department. I am trying to work through some job descriptions and hope to talk with the Mayor to see if we can get advertised some positions here very soon because we are getting crazy busy, and it doesn't seem like there's going to be any let up. It's overdue, we are ready. I think we are in a good spot.

Councilperson Synek said we have the finances to do a lot of things. The constraint for us is more on a manpower/womanpower demand level that it is on a financial level; and not to blame you, but you are the focal point for all that stuff. We have to be fair to you, and your department that you work with to not put too much of a load on you. So, I am just saying, if there's anything as we as a Council or a committee can do to make sure you have all the resources at your disposal to make your life to not have this stuff keep you awake at night, we are all ears to that and fully support you. You do a great job. I appreciate all you do above and beyond in so many ways, and I just wanted to take a moment to acknowledge you and my sincere appreciation for the work you do.

City Engineer Ramm said thank you very much. I appreciate it Councilperson Synek.

Chairman Trakas said I think he speaks for everybody.

Councilperson Veverka said all of us.

Chairman Trakas said on the last agenda we sent out, I think we made a change that was inadvertent. That was my fault. So, we had talked about having an agenda item Residential Storage of City Provided Trash and Recycling Containers. So, that somehow didn't make the cut on this last agenda, and again I spliced this together after the Workshop that we had the other day; but I did want to bring that up. That was something that Councilperson Synek had raised and wanted to make sure that we put that on the agenda if it's okay with everybody.

Chairman Trakas said Councilperson Synek it's on the agenda, why don't you share your ideas.

Councilperson Synek said I got 2 separate resident concerns, issues recently about the City owned garbage cans. We have a recycling can and a garbage can and regular trash can. They are pretty large things. So, I can see where people might not want to take and store them in the garage. You do see a number of them out in the side yard or out in the yard; and basically what I heard from residents was this doesn't look very nice when people leave their garbage cans. Some people use them to fight with their neighbor and use them to mark the property line in the middle of the front yard, that sort of thing. Others just kind of tend to keep them outside the garage and plainly visible, and it's pretty unsightly. We are doing lots of things in the community to try to improve the aesthetics of our community, and I did reach out to Mike Gero and ask do we have any rules about where garbage cans can or should be stored? His word back to me was that no there isn't any particular rule or ordinance that would create a set of instructions to residents about what's an appropriate place, where's an appropriate place to store your garbage cans, and just wondering if others had thoughts. Maybe that's a rule or an ordinance we ought to explore.

Chairman Trakas said with respect to that, I thought that it was in ordinance, and I looked it up and couldn't find it. I thought it was there that said you can't take your trash out before 6:00 p.m. on the day before it was due. That was the only thing I saw that was related to that. So, with respect to the storage, I know that some communities ask that there be a buffer, either you store them behind trees or a fence or in your garage. I don't think that is a burden at all. I think that actually makes some sense, rather than having them outside. Does anyone else have an opinion on that?

Councilperson Veverka said well I would have a comment simply because having visited 3,000 houses along with the Mayor, there are definitely some constraints on a number of houses as to where they could put a garbage can. It might have to do with the position of where the driveway is, the fact that there is no easy access to a backyard or other location. There definitely are constraints for a number of houses. I think I would be cautious about a blanket rule because then we are going to have grant exemptions. So, I would suggest before we go in that direction, people take a serious look around town, members of the committee, and see what some of the constraints are for some of the individuals before we jump on the bandwagon of let's make a rule.

Chairman Trakas said that's fair. Anyone else have any thoughts?

Finance Director Blaze said there are constraints for topographical reasons or other issues, but I know of very few homes in Independence that don't have a garage; and I think it was mentioned that it's another place. It's just a shame that the community itself won't just put the containers in a spot on their own that are unoffensive to the neighbors and to people passing by in the public street where now the Government has to get involved and pass an ordinance. You would just hope that the common sense would kick in and say look I am going to put these behind the house. I am going to put these behind the tree. I am going to put them in the garage. I am going to do my neighbor a favor and my community a favor and not let everybody see these out there 7 days a week.

Councilperson Veverka said just as a possible suggestion, in the Independence Post, maybe that's a topic that someone should mention. Where are your garbage cans? Are they in a position where they might be unsightly from the street? Do you have any options that might make the front appearance of your home more pleasant?

Chairman Trakas agreed. The other thing, I know that Cleveland Heights and Lakewood have statutory restrictions on where trash cans can go. In my limited research, those 2 communities, I know they are pretty restrictive in a lot of things; so I looked up their ordinances, and there's was either behind a garage or behind a home or behind some type of cover, not necessarily inside of a garage. I think from a sanitary perspective, we have to think about these things as well that you can have raccoons and animals. I know God Bless my late dog Nero, he found every lousy bone that was on the street that had been in someone's garbage can at one time. So, he was playing with the thing, and good God what do you want? You don't really like your dog having a 6 month old bone running around the street, but he did. There are some health concerns as well.

I think some due diligence might be appropriate so you can do something that's unintrusive, but at the same time, respecting the standards of the community as well as some of the legitimate concerns about animals or people pilfering trash when it's not out in front of the curb.

Councilperson Synek said there's sort of a societal issue at play here. This whole shutdown, Covid, fear your neighbor sort of philosophy that has crept into our way of life over the past year. Neighbors don't talk to each other anymore, and this whole shutdown thing has increased fear of strangers and xenophobia which means fear of strangers. The City is going to find itself, if we can't do something to promote a sense of community and neighbors being neighborly again, the City is going to constantly find itself in the middle of these sort of unhappy neighbors; and I don't know I just raise that as a sort of an observation point. Whatever we can do to rebuild that sense of community, get the Civic Center opened fully functioning, get the community programs going, Home Days, parades, all that stuff, it helps. Playing off of Vern's comment, Government should not be the solution to every problem. You have to make a rule is the tough heavy hand of Government; I don't like that at all either. I don't know what the answer is exactly, but much of this is an outcropping of a little bit of shutdown and fear of strangers, and I look forward to that dissipating and we as community leaders doing all we can to rebuild that sense of community.

Chairman Trakas said Section 660.19 of our Codified Ordinances handle trash deposit and that type of thing if you want to take a look at that section. It doesn't spell out what we are talking about, but it does have other types of regulatory things.

Mayor Kurtz said it just deals with the timeframes. Both of your points are well taken. I am going to have the Building Department, Service Department inspectors to see if there's something that can be done, like people ask for shielding on one side of air conditioners and stuff. Maybe there is a solution to the majority of the challenges. If they can't put them in the garage, why not? If you can't then, other if you drive by some of these garages, you can see why they can't put them in the garage. You think with Covid and all the trash we pick up, we cleaned a lot of garages out; but I think they refilled a lot of them. So, I think it warrants discussion, but let us gather some data first because it absolutely is something, I know myself and Dale, we have seen it; and at some point we just need to understand it better so that we can at least, maybe through a narrative, we can do something to educate our people and to make them buy in to a strategy that is all about this sense of community.

Chairman Trakas said that sounds like an excellent approach Mayor. Anyone disagree with that?

Chairman Trakas asked is there anything else to be placed on the agenda for tonight? Any other topics that you would like to discuss? Well very good, having said that, by the way Don, thank you once again. We really appreciate everything you put together. Maybe on some of those other projects, we will come back maybe in late May if that's a fair enough timeframe. I know you have a lot of engineering contracts and everything else. If we give you about 4 or 5 weeks, would that be acceptable?

City Engineer Ramm said yes.

Chairman Trakas said obviously we have that ordinance that's pending that we may bring to the committee as well, depending on what the main body of Council wants to do. Maybe those are several of those types of discussions we can have.

Is there a motion to adjourn the committee meeting at 5:33 p.m.?

Moved by Councilperson Synek, seconded by Councilperson Veverka, to adjourn the Utilities Committee meeting of April 29, 2021. Committee Polled: 3 yes/0 no; motion carried.

There being no further business, the Utilities Committee meeting was adjourned at 5:33 p.m.

