

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE  
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES  
JUNE 29, 2021 AT 3:00 P.M.  
VIA ZOOM**

Present: Chairperson Kathleen Kapusta  
Councilperson Jim Trakas  
Councilperson Chris Walchanowicz

Also Present: Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz  
Vice Mayor Dave Grendel (arrived at 3:43 p.m.)  
Councilperson Kenn Synek  
Finance Director Blaze  
Recreation Director Tom Walchanowicz  
Community Services Office Coordinator Amber Veverka  
Clerk of Court Angie Zidanic (left at 3:08 p.m.)

Chairperson Kapusta called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Chairperson Kapusta said we will begin, and I appreciate everyone's accommodation of the schedule change, it worked out for one of our members; so thank you very much for doing that.

We will start off with the first item on the agenda, and we will turn it over to you Angie.

Clerk of Court Angie Zidanic said thank you Chairperson Kapusta. I am going to fill you in on some of the drug prevention updates. As you know, with the challenging year we had with Covid, there were some things that got sidelined, but I would like to tell you that as a follow up to our Angst program, Amanda Jaranowski who works at the Cuyahoga Valley Career Center took that to their staff; and they did another showing of Angst to the CVCC staff. They loved it. So, she thanked 25 and Alive for spearheading that which I have to thank the schools for taking the lead on that. So, they were able to do that at CVCC as well for the staff.

Chairperson Kapusta asked what kind of feedback if any had you gotten about that, I would be interested in hearing a little bit.

Clerk of Court Zidanic asked from CVCC?

Chairperson Kapusta said or even from our community.

Ms. Zidanic said from what I understood from the community, they were very appreciative of just highlighting the mental health issues. I don't have anything in writing from anybody, it's just kind of what I heard some of the teachers talking about. I know the staff was very

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appreciative of watching the movie because it brought them to a greater understanding of what to look for with students as well.

Chairperson Kapusta said good, thank you.

Ms. Zidanic said I do know the CVCC staff was very pleased with it also.

Just an update on the student drug testing, as you know, Mary and Eric were not planning on going forward with the Drug Free Clubs of America. They felt that it was no longer a good fit for our community; and they were looking at alternative programs. I did reach out to Eric, as you know Mary Dolejs retired this year; and Eric is not planning on, he doesn't have anything planned for the coming year for the drug testing. I think Covid just kind of sidelined all of that; but he is continuing to work on it, we just don't have an update of what program it will be at this point.

Just to fill you in on Campus Life. Campus Life wrapped up the school year. They did a great job in operating during Covid, but there were 30 hours throughout the year that were agreed upon between the City and Campus Life that they were not able to get into the schools or have any meetings. So what they did is they agreed to make these hours up in the summer. So, they have 14 different activities planned throughout the summer which will kind of keep the kids involved and kind of connected. It's bike riding and hikes and campfires. They have a Cedar Point trip planned; so they have many things to keep the kids engaged throughout the summer. They are also offering a camp in July. It's not a school sponsored event because it is a faith based camp, but they will give students the opportunity to attend that as well.

Regarding some of the school initiatives, I do consider these drug prevention updates just because I think that any time that you can keep students engaged and learning it gives them an alternative. So, one of the programs at the middle school, in fact it's the entire school, all three principals are working on a technology policy; and what they are working towards is to maybe have less screen time for the kids and more interactive activities for them. So, one thing we have planned for the fall is going to be an internet safety presentation. It is either going to be done through the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force or there's another woman, a private company, her name is Jessie Weinberger. So, we are looking at those two alternatives for, we call it internet safety; but it is kind of like online safety and helping parents to understand what their children are doing and helping them to keep them safe.

Our Prevention Specialist Alexa she finished the year with 39 new referrals and 24 continued from last year, for a total of I believe 63 students that were in process to receive services from her this year. So, I think that's a record number for her since she started.

We have legislation on the July Council meeting to renew that agreement with the schools; so hopefully I am hoping that will pass and Alexa will continue to do her good work for us.

Chairperson Kapusta asked would you remind me, that's a shared agreement right between the school and the City for the salary?

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Ms. Zidanic said it is, yes. Does anybody have any questions?

Councilperson Trakas said thanks a lot Angie. I was just curious, we have had a relationship with Drug Free Clubs of America for some time, what was the issue, why are we not planning to go ahead with them?

Ms. Zidanic said I think the school was not satisfied with the delivery of services. If you would like, I can go back and check my notes from I think it was about a year ago, 6 or 9 months ago maybe when Mary had mentioned, they just didn't feel that it was a good fit for our community anymore; so they started to look into other alternatives. Even some drug testing companies that do work for corporations to see if that would be a fit; but Eric is going to have to continue to look into that. Of course, I offered my help if he needed any as well.

Councilperson Trakas said okay, interesting.

Chairperson Kapusta said as an aside, do we have a replacement for Mary Dolejs yet, or do you know?

Ms. Zidanic said I do not know. There hasn't been an announcement to my knowledge. I don't know if the Mayor has heard anything, but I have not.

Chairperson Kapusta said we really don't replace Mary, she was a wonderful asset to our school and to our community; so it's great. Any other questions of Angie? Thank you very much, we appreciate the updates, as always it keeps us in the loop with what's going on; so thank you very much.

Ms. Zidanic said thank you for inviting me.

Chairperson Kapusta said we will move on in the agenda then to Community Services, and I see that Amber does have two items on the agenda. The second actually is going to be, I am assuming, a merged conversation because it's regarding the survey that was done, and it's going to be taking into effect both of the Community Services as well as the Recreation Department. So, we will let Amber start.

Amber Veverka said I am going to put up my presentation. We are going to discuss the survey together; so I just have two slides to briefly cover the re-opening of the Community Services Department. With our re-opening, we were doing a phased approach. We slowly started introducing programming. We are now trying to open up the building itself a little more; so we decided to allow the City organizations and private rentals to start renting July 10<sup>th</sup> this year. We no longer have to deal with the indoor distancing or capacity restrictions; so we are comfortable having people back in the buildings.

The hours of operations are still currently on the temporary hours of operation, but we are hoping once we get our staffing up to snuff that we can go back to the evening and weekend hours that we normally would have seven days a week. Just to briefly touch upon staffing, since we talked about this in March, I wanted to give everybody an update as it went along with the re-opening.

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We have been sharing some staff with the Recreation Department since April. We did replace Marcia, the Assistant Youth Program Coordinator in May. We started using volunteers to help with meal distribution, not only handing out but delivery in June once they were a bit more comfortable to be out with other seniors. Then our kitchen staff, which they have been gone since last March, they will be returning in August. So, we hope that once we are getting our staff in order that we will be back to those normal hours of operation.

An update on the other positions, they are currently on the website. These are the ones that are in process below.

Just the second slide I wanted to touch upon a couple of our youth and adult programs as it goes along with the re-opening. We were able to bring back one of our special youth programs that the parents and kids really enjoy. It used to be called Fairy Tea Party, and our youth programmers decided to change the theme to make it more open. They had a great group, the parents are really pleased with that program, and so like I mentioned in March, the team has been thinking of really creative ways in this kind of transition period to step up the programming, try something different, try something new and it's going pretty well.

Then also we weren't able to offer the summer playground last year, but this year we were able to bring it back slightly modified and hopefully by next summer we can go back to more of the normal format.

Adult programming, we are going to be wrapping up the drive-thru lunches that were started during the pandemic now that we can be back inside together and be social. We are going to bring those lunches back at the beginning of August. We would normally do a Tuesday and Wednesday light lunch with programs, and then a 55+ lunch which is our larger lunch on Fridays. The Senior Organization has told me that they are going to start back up in September; so they will be back in shortly after us; and then Lori has started to look into bus trips to start in the fall.

Chairperson Kapusta asked any questions of Amber?

Chairperson Kapusta said I actually have two Amber. One is really more of a comment. I saw here and I saw in our Spotlight about the use of the volunteers; and I greatly applaud that. We did at one time have quite a robust volunteer group, and then with the passage of time and of course last year in particular I know that dissipated. I am a firm believer in that build it and they will come; well ask them and they will come. I think we have so many in our community who want to give back, who want to take on another role at another level; and the fact that we do the volunteer recruiting, it's really a two-way street. We certainly benefit from it, we know that because helping maybe reduce some little manpower needs here and there at least or make it a little bit easier on our paid staff on some occasions. Just for the individuals too, what they get in return in terms of volunteering, and I know we have always done an amazing job as a city in giving them accolades where it's appropriately due when they have helped out and done things. So, I am excited to see that resurrecting, and I hope we go even stronger with that aspect of the programming, I like that.

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I also wanted to make a comment too about the desserts. I had occasion to be in touch with one or two area senior care facilities, so I talked with them, I talked a little bit about our program; and I know that I asked then if Lori Rizzardi would make a contact. One of the first ones that I know she made was Mount Alverna; so I think that's a real plus to have that kind of a reciprocal relationship because certainly our residents benefit from the delicious desserts they provide. We don't have to take on that responsibility then as a City, but more importantly, we are forming that relationship. So, I know that when the programming will start up again, a few had mentioned that they have already been in touch with Lori about coming out to make little presentations; and again I think that's critical. Sometimes I know the presentations they make towards seniors may be topical in that we are going to talk about hearing loss. Other times they try to talk about their facility too, and I see that in a positive vain because we know that many of us may have to at some point and time make that decision for either ourselves or our family, and it's a very, very difficult decision but one that is certainly facilitated by familiarity. So, knowing a face, knowing a name, knowing a little bit about the facility can expedite and can ease that process tremendously for our residents. So, I just wanted to make note of those two points, the volunteers and the linkages with the area facilities, and I applaud your department for doing that. I hope you continue to grow that more.

Amber Veverka said thank you, and Lori has actually made it her mission the last couple of weeks to contact many different companies in the area; and she was able to line up desserts for an entire month worth of lunches, and not only that, but these companies send people to help her pass out the lunch. So, I think that's a great thing, and I think that when we come inside the building, those partnerships will be able to continue.

Just to comment on the volunteers, we actually have a lot of fresh faces. The people who are volunteering are people who have never volunteered with us before; and they are just coming out of the woodwork and saying how can we help. We are vaccinated, and we are ready to help. So, I think that's been wonderful.

Chairperson Kapusta said that's great, and I know I suggested to Lori too that if we can hopefully in May have our Older Americans Fair that we always had, that will be another opportunity for some of those community partners to come back with a presence and explain more to our residents and so forth. That's good, very, very good; so I am glad to hear that.

Do you guys want to go in together to talk about the survey now?

Amber Veverka and Tom Walchanowicz said yes.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said just to give a little background on the survey and why it was initiated to begin with. Back in the winter of 2020 it was February to be exact, we had a group of residents that approached our departments and the Mayor's office. So, the Mayor called a meeting back then in his office one evening, and Marilyn Senick was alive at the time, and we all got together and had a really lengthy discussion in regard to programming and facilities that the residents would like to have. So, from there it was the ground work, and unfortunately Covid came the next month so we kind of sidelined things somewhat, and then both departments here collaborated; and we came up with a nice survey. We ended up getting it out this past April, and

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we ran it for over a month. We were going to run it for just a month, but we got so many responses back that we let it go for another ten days; and we ended up having over 525 surveys were turned in, both electronically and by paper. Out of a city of 7,000 people, we thought that was a really good response.

This is the original survey that was sent out, and you can see some of the questions that were asked. It was a pretty broad survey, and we put a lot of space for comments after each questions; and boy did we get the comments. I think there was 60 pages of raw data, all the comments and answers.

Amber Veverka said there was quite a lot of sift through. We are still kind of going through it.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we are still combing through it. As you can see as we go on, a lot of great, positive things mostly actually; but a lot of things that people are asking for and some of the stuff we can really add. Some of the stuff was a little bit out of the range for a city of our size because some of the stuff that people were asking for, we wouldn't have enough people in our town to support it and the cost. Like an example, an indoor ice skating rink, just for Independence itself, it's kind of out of our reach; but maybe down the road we can collaborate with some other cities, and that might be a possibility. A lot of the things I think we can act upon, and we actually started between both departments and now that we have the green light to really open things up, we are really going to try and give the residents what they want, additional things I should say.

Amber Veverka said this will be a little out of order because I want to cover demographics first, but we just kind of polled the number of people in each age group who live in your household. It's all across the board, we had all different ages fill this survey out. We even passed this out at a couple of different lunches; so we did a get a wide variety of responses, people who lived in varied households for instance.

The other question, there's another question about how many years you have lived in the City; just I think more of a curiosity just to see how many people are new, how many people have lived here 50 years just because they might not have an idea of the programming or if they have lived here 50 years but they say I have never participated in anything, but since I am retiring maybe I will. So, it was interesting to see all the different responses for the demographics.

The first question was just a general satisfaction, how do people view the Recreation Center, the Civic Center just based on everything. The responses, as Tom said, we had a lot of really good responses. For the most part, 87% are either somewhat satisfied or very satisfied; and then for those who kind of fell into the other smaller categories, like Tom said, we gave them plenty of space to give us why they are not satisfied or what kind of potential do they see for our departments.

Councilperson Trakas said any business would love to have an 87% satisfied rate, so good work.

Amber Veverka said not too bad, high B right. Tom, did you want to explain Question 5?

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Recreation Director Walchanowicz said so Question 5 we thought was a good question to ask; and that was if you had \$100 and you were able to allocate that to City programs, parks, facilities, how would you direct the funds in the categories below. It was really interesting to see, as you can tell here that number one was improvements, maintenance of existing parks and recreation facilities. So, that was up on everyone's list, and interestingly enough, the second one that came in a very second actually was the construction of new facilities and/or programs. So, between the two, if you put it in percentage wise, that was over 60%.

Then the next one that came in was special events and community programming, and that's concerts and the lunches, that is where that category came in.

The last one was the acquisition and development of additional park lands. So, I think that gives us a good flavor of what is on the community's mind. They definitely want the parks to have improvements and the property to be maintained and some construction possibly of some new facilities. Anybody have any comments or questions at this time as we go along?

Chairperson Kapusta said so remind me Tom, we had those four categories; and they were to allocate between those four or they could tell you their other choices?

Amber Veverka said there was an area for other as well. So, the numbers don't add up, and the way the survey was made, it didn't restrict you to \$100, it was open-ended. So, some people put in other, so like an additional \$100. So, we didn't include the other because it was just so open-ended. These were the four main, we wanted people to allocate the \$100.

Chairperson Kapusta said thank you.

Amber Veverka said so this goes back to the construction of new indoor and outdoor facilities. These were just some ideas of facilities that are popular in other communities or that we don't currently have for instance. So, they could check as many as they wanted.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we came up with, our staff kind of brainstormed of some ideas of additional facilities or programming; and this is what we came up with. These are the responses for each one. As you can see, we just opened that Hemlock Trail, but as you can see, at the top of the list was additional nature trails and additional bike trails. Then sledding hills actually came in a close third. So, those three areas right there I think have some potential because some of the trails are a fairly inexpensive addition to some of our things that we can do for our residents.

Chairperson Kapusta said Tom I'm interested if I could, the sixth one down, I remember seeing that on the survey. Do we have the capacity on Elmwood pond to do kayaking?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we discussed that. In our brainstorming session we all said if we could just find something else to do out there. It could be a good beginners' kayak pond. Again, it's still up for discussion to be honest with you.

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Chairperson Kapusta said I remember going out to Coe Lake which of course is much bigger in Berea; but they actually only used a very small part of it right by the dock there. What they did was they did kayaking instruction; so you just had some staff there who was doing that with people who wanted to learn. I could see something like that, I didn't know how many actual kayaks we could get out on that pond; but I think giving some thoughts about what other things we can do with that would be great. As I pass by, a lot of times I think it's like a diamond in the rough. There could probably be something else we could do with it; so that's a good idea.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said correct, and a couple of us actually were out at Coe Lake; and we did see that little dock that they have for the kayak launches and that's where we kind of got this idea from also too. I understand that Coe Lake is a little bit larger than ours, but I think that there is a possibility there.

We put the dog park in there because I know there was a lot of talk about the dog park; and we do have an issue with the residents using the baseball fields and issues that come with that. So, we did put that in there, and there were a lot of different responses on that. Amber did put together some results on that.

Amber Veverka said so the reason they polled the dog park in particular, even though it's Number 5 on the list is because the amount of comments related to the dog park within the survey were much larger than any other topic in the survey. There were a lot of people who directly mentioned the dog park, we need a dog park. That's like the only thing I want, and we went through and actually pulled those particular mentionings of the dog park throughout the survey. So, we just kind of broke it down. There were a lot of people who took the survey, and who adamantly were like absolutely not on the dog park. Then some said a dog park was fine, but there has to be conditions. So, I just kind of broke that down as an example of this feedback we got just relating to that one facility.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said and it seems like the common theme throughout all of these survey responses are people are very possessive of their park and their facilities. So, whatever else we build around here, they kind of want it for residents only and not open per se to non-residents. So, there were quite a few people who said that if we do get a dog park, they were for it; but they would want access cards like the Civic Center pass to get into it. There were a couple of responses that said that they didn't want it in the park itself by the ballfields, they wanted it on its own separate area which we definitely would, whether we find land up towards the Service Department Building or if anybody else has another idea. So, there's definitely, it seems like a want for this added recreation feature.

Amber Veverka said so we went through and just kind of pulled some of the top comments. Like we said, there was like 60 pages of raw data; so everyone had great ideas. Everyone wants something, but these are a couple of things that we pulled. Some of the top requests were more evening and weekend programs and classes, especially for those who work full-time, more outdoor classes, bus trips; but this was before we decided to bring those back. There was a need for programming, more for ages 25 to 40 and 45 to 55, somewhere in those ranges. We do a lot of youth programming in the Community Services Department. We have a lot of senior programming, so there seems to be a gap that we need to take a look at somewhere in the middle.

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Some of the top ideas for programs for adults, coed sports like team sports, card clubs, arts and crafts classes, golf, seniors tai chi which actually before I even gave some of the information from the survey to Lori, she said hey I'm doing a tai chi class; so that will be coming up. They are asking for computer classes. We have tried computer classes. We don't get enough people signing up for them; but possibly post-Covid now that everyone has had to basically jump into technology whether they wanted to or not; we might be able to have some kind of attendance for computer classes or phone classes, things like that now that people know that there might be a situation where I might need to use this again.

Chairperson Kapusta said Amber, if I could ask a question please about the computer classes. When we had them at our Civic Center, is it instructional just like verbal? Do they have access to a computer, the participants? How does that work?

Amber Veverka said the last time we offered it, it was an iPad, iPhone class; so you would bring your own tablet or phone; and we contracted an instructor to do a hands-on class.

Chairperson Kapusta said because I was just wondering if sometimes, I didn't know how we were doing it; and I think maybe sometimes we would have had a lower attendance if people didn't think the device was available for them to use, but they brought their own.

Amber Veverka said some of the ideas, some of the top survey results for youth were sports or a different variety of sports, martial arts and hockey for example were a couple of the ones that we don't currently offer, then dance and gymnastics. We are kind of on the fence about offering dance classes because we do have dance studios in town. We don't necessarily want to take away the business of those small businesses in town who are still coming off of a year-long struggle. Gymnastics, I think Tom you tried gymnastics a couple of years ago.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we did about three years ago, and we were able to have a couple of classes; but again we had to have non-residents participate to make it worthwhile to pay the instructor to conduct the class. So, that's the issue sometimes that we have is that we have to invite non-residents to make a class go; and like Amber said too, with some of the dance classes and ballet classes that people are asking for, we don't want to compete with our neighboring Independence businesses. So, when we do get the request, we kind of defer to the dance studios in town.

Amber Veverka said and Tom you make a good point, to fill the classes we often can't just limit it to residents because of our size or whatever the availability is; so for a lot of people who did leave comments about I want this facility, but I want only residents to use it, sometimes it's just not possible or not realistic.

Chairperson Kapusta said I wanted to ask too when we were talking about recruitment of people for the programs, and I am going to talk in our post-Covid world now not during the last year or so; but I know that historically you have shared with us that you have used other means to get information to the parents regarding some of the youth programs. Are we still going to or planning to use those vehicles? I think you were putting flyers in which the children took home. They got them through the schools that disseminated them. I know at one time we talked about

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even putting some things in the principals' newsletters. Are we still going to use those supplemental ways? We have a great Spotlight, I know that; but I know as a busy parent when I could think back, if I would have been reminded sometimes of things, I think my kids could have participated in more of them too. Are we thinking of doing those things again?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said yes, and we actually had at the end of the school year, we did work with the schools and they did put some of our advertisements like for our Little League program in the principals' weekly newsletter; and they actually let us pass out flyers. So, yes we did.

Chairperson Kapusta said okay, good.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said actually social media really helps us out too for the parents, the younger parents obviously with kids. They are really in tune with the social media.

Again, any other questions on anything from the survey?

I guess just a summary is that it's still a work in progress for both departments. This survey ended right when both of us really started ramping up; so we are still diving in and digesting all this information and getting with our immediate staff and just kind of laying out all the results and all the comments and suggestions. So, we will be working on this for probably the next two months or so, just trying to get everything dialed in; and then we are going to respond back to some of the residents. Some of the residents wanted to be responded back to. This is a big undertaking, and we are doing the best that we can with the busy time of the year that we are in now.

Amber Veverka said some of the comments were related directly to some of the programming that we weren't able to offer when we were getting to that ramping up; so a lot of the comments in there have been resolved with regard to the things we weren't doing. For instance, people were asking for summer playground, bus trips, bringing in the lunches; so some of the things are in progress and then some of the other items. There was some really interesting and cool ideas in here, we are always willing to try new programming. You can always just set it up and see if you get the people, just advertise it. A lot of our programming, we just throw it out there, you never know who you are going to get. So, our team is always trying to think of new and creative ways to get different types of programming and activities in there.

Chairperson Kapusta asked does anyone else have any questions for Amber or Tom?

Mayor Kurtz said one thing that's important to note that we take away is that we are coming to a crossroads in terms of some of our facilities and programming. The programming we can incorporate based on our existing infrastructure; but the full breadth or the ability or capacity to add more programs and more diverse programs incorporating school children and technology is going to rest on how we look at our facilities' upgrade. We are taking the data that we have assembled, we are reviewing that to determine to what extent the community would support expanding our facilities and being able to add and incorporate some of these additional facilities and talking about land and talking about upgrading and upkeep of our facilities. You know we

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have a number of initiatives out there we talk about during our capital budget review in terms of adding a little bit here and little bit there. We are looking at this comprehensively, and so the goal would be sometime in the near future to have a more robust discussion about, a more comprehensive approach to being able to fulfill some of the needs and requests of our residents but also to be able to let them know that we heard what they said that they are willing to invest in more land, more infrastructure so that they can have more capacity in terms of programming.

Chairperson Kapusta said and I would just remind too having been on the Board of Education back in the early 2000's when we were so blessed to have a collaborative effort with our City to build our facility, our new high school. We built that as everybody remembers I know, a lot on the collaborative model of the City could use and that helped pay for some of that facility. I have always felt that we have not taken that to the best degree that we could. Now I know that it worked out good with like the school programs for the children during the Covid, and we did that in the school facilities. I thought that was a great step; but you know, I'm just going to throw things out. There are computer labs, there's auditorium space, there's pottery areas, there's so many things; and I think we just don't integrate enough. I look at some other communities around, and Solon is one that comes to my mind. I will see they are having this thing for the seniors over at the school; and I think that's valuable for a number of reasons. One is, and I'm not saying it will supplant the need for additional or improved facilities, but I think we can also make better use of what we have by doing that. I think it's good for another reason, and that is we still have a divide in so many ways between our senior and adults and then our young family community. I think we need to do something more to kind of nourish that and to bring that together. It's okay if you happen to have grandchildren, and you are blessed enough to have grandchildren, you are back in the schools seeing the plays and the Christmas concerts and all the things like that; but I know we used to even have an arrangement when Mr. Gunlicks was here that we would have the seniors be able to have a luncheon, actually we did it at the high school; but even if we did it at our building. Then they went over, and they watched the dress rehearsal, and things like that, that interchange, I think we need to nurture that more.

The other reason I think it's good to nurture is because we know that just like we are sitting here talking about needs that we have, obviously there are and there will continue to be needs that our educational community has, our school has. While I think we have a very responsive community in general to that, I have always been of the mind that when you can show people, a picture is worth a thousand words, so you take them there, you integrate them, you get them involved with the students and with the programming. I just tend to think people are going to be more responsive when you put your hat on and say we have a levy, and we need this. So, I think it's for a number of reasons, and that's certainly the lesser of all of them in my mind. I really would love to see us be able to continue, and I'm not saying we don't do it, I know we do; but I think we have some room for growth in that area. So, that would be my comment on that.

I did also want to say that I was extremely impressed with the fact that you said you had 60 pages of comments and the numbers as we referenced earlier, people participated; and I think that speaks well on both sides of the coin. I think it speaks well to your departments and your openness to our residents because I am going to tell you, if I thought you guys would never listen, I for one wouldn't have written anything. Obviously the fact that people took their time and effort to do it is because they knew there would be a responsiveness from you; so I

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appreciate that. Also, I think it speaks well of our residents. For the most part, we have residents who are very invested in our community, it's not just a place they hang their hat, but it's a place they make their lives. I think they believe that they can give some input and to improve things. So, that's just really a great thing to have.

I would like to suggest, we did this with the school years ago when I was on the Board, when we had the PI levies I remember it was still Al who was here; I would suggest to him that when we use the money to do things that the residents gave us, they voted those taxes in, that we would put signage up. So, I remember when we did a parking lot, we had signs your PI dollars at work. I would like to suggest that where it's viable, and I am not giving you a whole bunch of extra work; but just where it's viable, if you can tell people that you are doing this because of the survey. You have a number of people who want, let's use the dog park, we had such a good response from residents who wanted a dog park; so we are doing that. I think people will continue to support us and continue to want to participate if they see that what the input they have is making a difference. So, if we can do that, and sometimes you may feel it's appropriate just to do it on an individual basis with the 5 or 10 people who might have made that remark; but I think it's not bad to say hey we started this new programming, and this is part of what was an offshoot from our survey. So, I think that would be very good.

By the same token, if you have some things that legitimately, and I think Tom you mentioned, we don't really see ourselves right now doing an indoor skating rink, maybe it's worth talking to a couple of handful of those people if they have identified themselves on the survey because again I think it makes you feel good to know that people cared enough to write, but that you cared enough to respond to them.

Then I would like to say, and I don't know if my fellow Council people concur with this, but I found this presentation to be extremely interesting, and I thank you for that. I for one if Mayor were to allow it, I would love us as a Council to either have a presentation like this and/or to at least get some of this data given to us. Even some of the comments, not identifying people, but just some of that so we would have a better understanding; I think that would be very helpful to us.

Mayor Kurtz said we are assembling that in a more legible form, considering the fullness of the response we got. Tom and Amber, when do you think you will have something synthesized to where it would be easy reading, and something that we can sink our teeth into, any idea?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said the end of the July.

Mayor Kurtz said by August we should have something. It will be informative, but it will also be something that we can have a discussion on.

Chairperson Kapusta said that's good, and it will help Council too as we go forward with decisions that you might present to us about projects or things that we need to allocate for. That's great.

Anyone else? I really enjoyed this.

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Tom, I think you had another agenda item on your overview of capital projects if you want to move into that then.

Councilperson Trakas said one quick thing before we get into that. I just think, I was glad to see the surveys, and I think it would be a good topic for a subsequent meeting to talk about resident only and what we might be able to have resident only and what might not, and a conversation with the Law Director on that. I think there's a lot of interest in that. I know I have always shared that, and I think it would be healthy to kind of flush that out.

Chairperson Kapusta said we can ask you to bring that forward sometime Amber and Tom, that would be great. Good idea.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said the final thing on the agenda would be just touching over the capital items that we have. Coming up, you will be seeing on the July Council Agenda will be the replacement of our Nautilus strength training equipment that's up in our Civic Center weight room. These machines are between 15 and 20 years old. Nautilus actually went out of business around 8 years ago; so we are having trouble getting parts for these. The new Precor which we are going to get, will be the state-of-the-art. They will be safer machines, and then there's 18 that we are replacing. They are actually giving us, 2 of the machines we had to get rid of in the past few years; they are actually taking those machines and giving us new ones for those also. So, we are getting a really good deal. We are able to pick our colors for the machines, so they will be a light silver with a navy blue. So, it's going to really dress up that room because now we have a blue rubber floor in that room that we put in several years ago. So, this will be a big enhancement for that building, and it's well overdue. Again, these are between 15 and 20 years old; so this would be a pleasant upgrade for that area.

Chairperson Kapusta asked any questions of Tom?

Vice Mayor Grendel asked what's the cost of these Tom?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said they will be a little under \$60,000.

Chairperson Kapusta said and that is where I was going too Tom. I think you had down there 18 machines.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz replied yes.

Chairperson Kapusta said that seems like a pretty good (inaudible) because those are not inexpensive.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said there's a lot to the machines. There is a lot to the setup when they come to take the old ones out and set the new ones up, that price is including the removal of the existing machines and bringing in the new ones and setting them all up. Then the old machines, we will put them on Govdeals, and we might get a private person or a private entity possibly out of state that will purchase these.

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Moving on to the next one is the floor replacement at the Elmwood Rec building, and we want to get this on the July Council agenda also. This is another long overdue project. People have been asking for a softer floor down there; so what we came up with, our best route to go would be a floor like we have at the Fieldhouse. It's a purelastic poured rubber floor, so they are able to go over this tile floor and transition it to the hallway and the front vestibule (inaudible). We were looking at a hardwood floor, but we just couldn't do it with the transition; and this floor that we have at the Fieldhouse is actually the next generation from that floor. It's very durable, people can still have parties in that gym down there. It will still be a very durable, again it's even more durable than the Fieldhouse floor. If you have been in the Fieldhouse, that floor is really holding up well. It is the same company there on State bid, Cincinnati Floor that will perform this work, and their earliest date that they can do this is October; so we will have this done in October.

We are probably still going to partner with the school, and the school is going to use this gym facility for three months in the winter for their wrestling program because they did it this past year; and it worked out very well. They were very appreciative of us sharing this building, and this rubber floor will just help enhance that area for wrestling also.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked and the pricing for this Tom?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said this is coming in around \$50,000 to \$60,000 also.

Councilperson Trakas said just a quick question. Tom, what is the main several functions of this building? So, what would be the majority of the types of functions that this building gets used for?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said well wrestling is going to be a 3 to 3 ½ month use of this. Then we have our regular rentals that we have, our basketball rentals that we have in there. Our residents use that for pickup basketball. We still have four nights a week we have different men's groups that come in there and use it for basketball and volleyball. Then we also have the weekend rentals that we have. Now also the ICAN Program uses that gym a lot. I am trying to think what else, and even sometimes the summer camp and summer playground use that. We have the star camp that uses that facility for four weeks in the summer. That gym and that whole building is very utilized.

Councilperson Trakas said so primarily athletics.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz replied yes.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked has there been any thought of moving, with the new floor going in, moving pickle ball into here and alleviating it from the Fieldhouse where we can open up a floor for basketball or winter baseball practices?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we can look at that. That's a good suggestion. Maybe we can set up two pickle ball courts in this gym. It's big enough for two courts. We could look at that.

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Councilperson Walchanowicz asked can't they line when they are doing the floor, can't they already line the floor for that as well?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said and that's why the price range is between \$50,000 and \$60,000, it depends on all the lines and different layouts that we have on the floor. So, yes they could line it for pickle ball.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said thank you.

Chairperson Kapusta said good idea Chris.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we are having the Civic Center gym floor re-sanded. The price isn't over \$15,000 so we don't have to go out to bid. We are taking informal bids, but we are going to have the Civic Center hardwood gym floor lines for pickle ball courts also.

Moving on here, the splash pad project; we have been doing a lot of research. We actually toured a facility which is located right here in Ohio in Ashland. Jim, I know you will be happy with this. They are on a Government contract, Sourcewell, so the Mayor brought up the suggestion of possibly ordering and buying the pieces and then bidding out the installation. So, that's what we are looking at, and buying it through Sourcewell first. Again, this is an Ohio based company. They make parts for splash pads, for pools, a lot of Cedar Point's new waterpark features all came from this location; and what's nice about it, they have staff that would come if there are ever issues. April and I both toured this facility last month, and we were very impressed with what they do there and how they make all these fiberglass pieces. Jim, I know you would be impressed, especially since this is made right here in our backyard. They ship all over the world too. They make spray grounds all over the world that they ship their products to. I was very impressed. Mayor, I know you would be impressed if you went and toured this facility also.

Councilperson Trakas said fantastic.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we do have a rendering of what we are looking at here. It won't be on the July meeting, but we are looking at possibly getting it on the August meeting because it just seems like everything we go to buy now, everything is backordered. We wait so long for some of these products, and as the Mayor brought up that we should get this stuff possibly ordered first because again we want to get this project going after the pool closes so we can have an opening for this new splash pad in early May. We want to open up this before the pool does.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked Tom, are you looking at the same location that we looked at a couple of years ago?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said yes, right next to the pool. After reviewing it and going over it with different people, we still came to the same conclusion that we are better offering this close to the pool where all the infrastructure is and where you have the facilities to access this, especially in the summertime when you have to have a pool membership to get in here. Again, this will be accessed through the pool in the summer months, and then it will have an access gate

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that you will have a swipe card that residents will use it when the pool is not open in May and in September when the weather is still conducive to swimming outside.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked and it will be residents only?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz replied correct.

Chairperson Kapusta said interesting you say that Tom because I have already gotten questions from two or three residents, and I thought it was interesting if not somewhat premature; and they were asking that same thing about residents only, and their premise was this is going to be like everything we do in Independence, such an amazing amenity, that it will just lure people, so they will be happy to hear that I am sure.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked we are going to have new items in the pool area? I know we had talked about replacing the activity pool with some of the items that are there.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said eventually we will. I think we have it on our capital budget in 2023 and 2024 if I am not mistaken. It won't be next year, but it will be in 2023 or 2024.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said moving on.

Finance Director Blaze asked what was the floor surface there? Was that still concrete?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said that floor surface right there in the rendering is a concrete floor. Some splash pads, you can get a concrete with a poured in place rubber half inch thick coating on top; and we are still looking through that. They did give us some contacts on that, and we can also use our contacts that did our dry playground. So, we are looking at that, but that is an added cost. This one here is a concrete surface.

Moving on here to the Civic Center improvements, again with the whole construction situation there we have now with everything being on backorder, we felt that it was best to hold off on this major project of reworking the locker rooms for that reason and also for looking at more of a possibly big picture upgrade to the Civic Center. So, we did put this on hold for right now, and the other thing is the City did secure the \$100,000 grant from the State for the upgrade of the kitchen; and again, the Mayor could maybe explain a little more, but we are looking at more of a big picture with this.

Chairperson Kapusta said Tom, with the grant there's no specifications as to when that needs to be utilized by.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said what we are looking at is that it's looking like it needs to be at least started by June of 2022.

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Chairperson Kapusta said okay, thank you. Anyone else have questions for Tom?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said moving on. This is just an example of how things are backordered. We ordered these golf carts. It was approved by Council back in, if I am not mistaken, it was April; and we put this order in. They were supposed to be in by the time the summer camp started, but unfortunately it went from the seat cushions that they couldn't get, to they can't get leaf springs and now it's another issue. The manufacturer cannot give us a date to when these new golf carts that we purchased back in April can be delivered. So, the company is helping us out. We do have rental units for right now that the summer camp is using; but as of right now, we do not have our new golf carts, and they cannot tell us when they will be delivered.

Mayor Kurtz said just to give you a little perspective, smaller equipment like those mini excavators or skid-steers, I know there are some manufacturers if you order them today, they are not taking orders for 2021 anymore because they can't deliver. They are scheduling out to 2022 for delivery.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said and the last big thing we have on the agenda here is the upgrade to the bocce ball courts. We did have a meeting with the citizens group that are involved in the bocce ball leagues, and we did come up with a layout. Norm Casini is finalizing some final layout of this area, and we want to start this after the bocce ball season in the fall. We hope to get this thing opened for the spring bocce season.

Chairperson Kapusta asked Tom, will it be the same number of courts that we have.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said yes, and it will be a lot easier access, handicap access, walkways. There will be a little sitting area. It's going to be really a big major improvement.

Chairperson Kapusta said so we won't have the life-threatening climb over the sides that we now have. That will be good.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said as soon as I get a final rendering, I will get it over to Council also.

Chairperson Kapusta asked and they will remain that dirt kind of gravelly thing that we have now, that consistency for the court? They are not going to be like turf or anything like that correct?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said no. They are going to be actually, oyster shell is what we found to be the best surface. They will be an improvement of what's in there right now.

That basically wraps our capital that we have, and Amber and I are open to questions.

Chairperson Kapusta asked any questions then?

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Councilperson Walchanowicz asked has there been any thought of changing the horseshoe pit area around to use for other aspects since we don't really have a whole lot of horseshoe play anymore in that area?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we were looking to converting two of the horseshoe pits over to corn hole. They have outdoor cement corn hole, and that's what we are in the midst of looking at right now Chris. We are looking at converting two of them over. There are a few people who still do play horseshoes, but since Bonnie (inaudible) passed away, the horseshoe team has really gone by the wayside.

Finance Director Blaze said that one other guy is out there almost every day.

Chairperson Kapusta said I see him out there. Who is that Vern, do you know that gentleman's name?

Finance Director Blaze said I don't. I just see him every time I'm driving my bike home from work at 6:00 p.m. or 6:30 p.m.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said on another note, the outdoor pool is basically open to normal or as normal capacity. We did train 10 new lifeguards. Cee and April just finished a class a week and a half ago. We are still a little short on staff. Our newer lifeguards are working more hours than they would normally work, but we are managing fairly well. I think the labor shortage is affecting us a little bit also, but we are managing. I am happy to see unlike other pools, we are back to normal hours. We are open until 9:00 p.m. during the week, and 8:00 p.m. on the weekends. So, our hours are back up. The Civic Center hours are still reduced a little bit, and we are closing at 8:00 p.m. during the week; but come fall we are going to turn that around. The Civic Center is in the slowest months now; so we are going to look at that in September. We will get back open to normal hours.

Chairperson Kapusta said I think one of the happiest things I saw was a couple of weeks ago when I went over there to the Community Services side and saw a table filled with all the seniors again. That was such a good feeling.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked have you been able to sit down with the Mayor and come up with a different strategy on keeping the non-residents out of the pool yet?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said a resident 16 and over can bring one non-resident into the pool. I think that seems to be working fairly well at this point, and with all the heat we have had, it is working. We will tweak things as the summer goes, but it seems to be working fairly well, what we have in place.

Chairperson Kapusta asked Chris what generated that question? Did you hear things from people?

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Councilperson Walchanowicz said there was just a weekend a few weeks back where we had some families sneak into the pool that didn't go through the gate, and we had talked about how we can prevent that from happening.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said I did address that issue, and since the time that happened, it has not to my knowledge happened again.

Mayor Kurtz said we have isolated incidents, people are always trying to find ways to beat the system. We have been flexible in terms of the one guest because it has obviously been utilized a great deal lately; but if someone comes in and they have that one guest; we are not here to create a hardship for anybody. There's flexibility in the system, and we are not overburdening the system, the Director and staff have done a great job managing, mediating, massaging the situation. I don't think you have heard a lot of complaints. There are isolated situations, we can't protect from those; but for the most part, the people are enjoying, they are really blessed and thankful they can enjoy the wonderful asset that we have.

Chairperson Kapusta asked any other questions, comments? Hearing none, I will ask for a motion to adjourn our meeting.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you Council very much, Madam Chairperson and Members of Council, thank you very much. Just one last comment if I may. I want to thank the team for doing a great job, great presentation and all the people who help work hard to compile the survey information. It's a treasure trove of data that we will be putting together for Council to synthesize; and we can then look at how we want to go forward with the master plan for our assets and our personnel.

Chairperson Kapusta said that's good. It's exciting times. Anything else? Do we have a motion to adjourn?

**Moved by Trakas, seconded by Walchanowicz, to adjourn the Community Services Committee Meeting of June 29, 2021. Voice Vote: 3 yes/0 no; motion carried.**

There being no further business to discuss, the Community Services Committee Meeting was adjourned at 4:08 p.m.