

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE  
PUBLIC LANDS & BUILDINGS COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES  
JULY 1, 2020 4:30 P.M.  
VIA ZOOM**

Present: Chairman Chris Walchanowicz  
Councilperson Tom Narduzzi  
Councilperson James Trakas

Also Present: Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz  
Vice Mayor Dave Grendel  
Councilperson Kathleen Kapusta  
Councilperson Kenn Synek  
Councilperson Dale Veverka  
Finance Director Vern Blaze  
Technical Service Director Dave Snyderburn  
Procurement Coordinator Dennis Zdolshek  
Recreation Director Tom Walchanowicz  
City Engineer Don Ramm  
Service Director Leon Karas  
City Planner Jeff Markley

Chairman Chris Walchanowicz called the meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.

Chairman Walchanowicz said we will get started today, just to kind of rehash a couple of the topics we discussed a few months back with Maple Shade cemetery. Mr. Snyderburn have you had the opportunity or do you have any of the quotes about the fencing that we had talked about previous to fence the cemetery in.

Technical Service Director Snyderburn said I think I gave you guys the quotes prior to this. I will look it up right now; but I think the fencing and the columns were somewhere in the neighborhood of \$60,000.

Councilperson Trakas said I think we had talked about maybe just over \$100,000 for a fence that would go all around the cemetery. The question I think we had at the time was where do we end it. There was discussion about perhaps procuring some property.

Technical Service Director Snyderburn said yes, you are correct. If we went further on the Rockside Road side, yes it would be upwards to \$100,000; but I thought Brecksville Road, the cemetery that we have right now, I think the estimate was somewhere around \$60,000 or \$65,000 with the columns. That was with Tech doing the electrical work and footers.

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Councilperson Trakas said you would need a budgeted amount of money in order to move forward on this project. Is that correct?

Technical Service Director Snyderburn said yes.

Vice Mayor Grendel said if you recall, when Doc Asseff was on Council didn't he say he was working with the RTA about a bus shelter or something. I don't know whatever came of that.

Councilperson Trakas said Mayor Togliatti contacted RTA, and they were going to put a more robust bus shelter up there from what I remember.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I do too Jim, I remember that.

Chairman Walchanowicz said the cement pad has been poured, and that was poured back in the beginning of the year. There's no structure there yet.

Technical Service Director Snyderburn said yes, I can comment on that. The structure is ordered. It is an enhanced structure. It's being painted, and it probably will be installed, I would venture to say within the next three weeks. She is going to give me an exact date, but I would think it would take no longer than the next three weeks. So, it's been taking a long time for the paperwork and to get an enhanced structure with a gable roof that matches the cemetery motif.

Chairman Walchanowicz said perfect.

Vice Mayor Grendel said so it will be like the one we have at the Cleveland Clinic.

Technical Service Director Snyderburn said that is correct. The Mayor wanted that. We were able to procure that.

Councilperson Trakas said Dave you are talking about the bus shelter that matches.

Technical Service Director Snyderburn said Mayor Kurtz wanted an enhanced version which is real nice. That's the one we procured.

Vice Mayor Grendel said so then the fence would be on either side of the shelter, and there would be a break there where the shelter is at.

Technical Service Director Snyderburn said that is correct.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I see.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked does anybody else have any comments about the potential fencing of the cemetery?

Councilperson Narduzzi asked what's the next step in moving forward?

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Chairman Walchanowicz said I think at this point we are going to have to sit down and come up with a budget on what we want to spend on fencing in the cemetery. Then we can give ourselves some options on where we go with it. Does that sound correct?

Councilperson Narduzzi said I guess it's at the point do we want a fence or don't we want a fence; and if we do want a fence, we have to see if there's enough support to allocate the money for it.

Chairman Walchanowicz said right.

Finance Director Blaze said for reference, \$25,000 was encumbered already last year in 2019 for fencing for the cemetery. The Capital Plan for this year does call for another \$50,000. Nothing has been etched in stone so no purchase order has been created yet for the \$50,000 allocation for 2020 but at least \$25,000 is tucked away on the side committed already.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think we should firm the prices up so this way we had planned for \$50,000 this year, and then we would have construction next year if we need say \$25,000 or so to complete the job. Again, if it's Council's pleasure to have that done. I think we should because of where we have the fencing in front of City Hall, in front of the Hemlock Cemetery. I think that would really enhance our cemetery here at Maple Shade.

Procurement Coordinator Dennis Zdolshek said I would just like to add that this because of the dollar amount involved would require it to be formally bid. Before we bid it, we have to have the specs nailed down and so forth.

Vice Mayor Grendel said sure, and we have to figure what we need to be bid on, and what our own workforce can perform as part of this job too.

Mayor Kurtz said Dennis can you frame up specifications for us, and then we can review those; but I think everyone understands that we are looking at columns with some type of aluminum wrought iron fencing, correct?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said correct. You know I can get together with Dave, I am sure he has a pretty good idea what he thinks we should do there. He has already done a lot of work on it, and probably mirror what we have done at the cemetery that is in the center of town. That might be a good start.

Technical Service Director Snyderburn said both Hemlock and in front of City Hall, yes.

Councilperson Trakas said Mr. Chairman I would just add, I would like to see; and we talked about this at the last meeting, I just wanted to see if this could be included in the specs is to have Maple Shade Cemetery or Maple Shade or something in writing over the gate to the cemetery. Make sure the gates are really appropriate, and you see a lot of very nice cemeteries around all over the country but really around town as well. I would like to see something that really stands out and is a nice memorial to the people who, our citizens who are buried there and who will be

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buried there. It's something that can be a point of pride, not just something you drive by on your way to Drug Mart.

Chairman Walchanowicz said I agree. When we quote that, or we decide how we are quote that, if we can have that as an option, what that would cost to go over the entrance.

Chairman Walchanowicz said next with regard to the cemetery. I have been contacted by a gentleman by the name of Dwain Harris. His name was given to me by Andre Law who is with Cleveland Catholic Cemeteries, and I know that you guys have discussed turning the old cold storage building into a niche burial area. I have given Mayor Kurtz a copy of what he has sent me. We can actually purchase a columbarium that holds 72 niches for just under \$15,000. If you break it down, it would only cost about \$210 per niche. We currently sell gravesites at \$450. I don't know what the numbers were that you guys originally discussed converting that old stone storage building was; but \$15,000 for a columbarium that could hold 72 urns sounds inexpensive. We will not have to gouge residents with getting one of those. For Council Members, Debi is going to send out this literature in Thursday's packet so you guys can see what it looks like, and they have three different colors with it. It is built with granite. I just thought I would run that by and see if anybody had any thoughts on something like that.

Mayor Kurtz said Mr. Chairman I appreciate the fact that you were able to research and give us some options. We are talking fencing. We are talking location for a columbarium wall. We are talking about future buildout, we are talking about extending the Master Plan and cementing a clear path for future generations to know where we are heading and using the 29 acres that's a potential.

Leon I believe has information to give you some statistics as to how many burials a year, how many spaces we have left; and then I think it might be incumbent upon us to take the data that we have assembled over the years, layer it and then see if there's a clear long term strategy that we can agree on. Then we can begin the process of determining how we are going to implement that Master Plan because there are a lot of moving parts here. I think there is a lot of opportunity to use this property efficiently.

Chairman Walchanowicz said it sounds like a plan.

Mayor Kurtz asked Leon, who has the data that I requested?

Service Director Karas said I have it Mayor. So, we currently have 72 graves, unsold graves remaining in the cemetery. We are averaging, in 2016 we sold 20, in 2017 we sold 15, in 2018 we sold 10, in 2019 we sold 6 and so far currently this year we have sold 10 as well. So, we have 72 remaining.

Mayor Kurtz said so we have 72 remaining, and how many burials do we have a year of the existing?

Service Director Karas said of the ones that we already purchased, those burials, in 2016 we have 56 with 40 full burials and 24 ashes. In 2017 we had 60 total with 37 full burials and 23 ashes.

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In 2018 we only had (inaudible). In 2019 we had 63 with 37 full burials and 26 ashes. That's kind of where we are at right now.

Mayor Kurtz asked the ashes are using full graves?

Service Director Karas said in some cases, but you can put in more ashes if there is already a full burial or you could put up to 6 ashes if there is nobody buried in the ground to be a full burial. So, essentially in one grave you do a full burial, you could have 5 total burials, and if you don't have a full burial you can do 6 (inaudible). That's kind of where we are at.

Mayor Kurtz said say that again.

Service Director Karas said if nobody is buried in that grave, you can put 6 ashes in that grave.

Mayor Kurtz said okay. Do we still have double deeps?

Service Director Karas said yes, we are doing double deeps.

Mayor Kurtz said so it gives you a perspective as to what we have in reserve, and so we have several years of reserve realistically; but no one wants to be in a position where we have nothing left. So, I think we should either engage a professional or find out internally how we can take all the ideas and plans that we put together over the past decade or so and then we can come back to the committee and share with you some thoughts, ideas, some cost estimates. Then everyone can weigh in and see if the plan we propose meets with your satisfaction, or you want to modify it.

Chairman Walchanowicz said okay.

Councilperson Kapusta said a question. My question is are we still only selling graves at time of need?

Mayor Kurtz said yes.

Councilperson Kapusta said okay, thank you.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked any other questions?

Councilperson Narduzzi said I think we went down this path 3 or 4 years ago, I remember when I ran the meeting and we discussed all of these things. It never went anywhere from there. It kind of ended right there because it wasn't an important issue at the time I believe. Now that we are coming down to, and if I am reading the numbers right, we are about a year and a half is all we have left before we start running into not having enough space if everybody did full burials. We have 72 graves left, and if we average 60 a year, that doesn't leave us a whole lot. We are getting close to that timeframe where I think we need to make a decision.

Councilperson Kapusta said the new sales are only about 10 or so a year. The 60 includes the folks who already have their graves Tom.

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Councilperson Narduzzi said so we are only burying 10 people there a year.

Councilperson Kapusta said no, sales are averaging about 10 new sales a year, 10 to 20 was the maximum. The bigger numbers were actual people who had their graves already plus the new sales.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think if we had the lots available for sale though you would see a number of people, including ourselves, who would purchase those. We have had it on an as-needed basis; so that's why I think if we make plans now and decide what the price point is and everything else, I think you would see a number of people purchase lots like we did back in the 1980's and 1990's when we had open sales.

Finance Director Blaze said sure, I think these are priced way under what competitive cemetery pricing is in northeast Ohio. So, I would assume you are 100% correct Vice Mayor that if we opened it up to just general sales, it's simple economics. When they are priced way below market value, of course, the demand is going to be quite high.

Vice Mayor Grendel said that's what we talked about, taking another look at the price and raising it accordingly and also giving options of a columbarium or other options. I think if you notice more and more people are being cremated, so that option needs to be available for residents too.

Mayor Kurtz said the thing about a Master Plan and agreeing on a strategy would be that we could determine exactly where we want to build that; and then we can construct that sooner rather than later.

Vice Mayor Grendel said in my business doing estate planning and that for a lot of residents, and if people who are over 70 and so, that is a concern and many who have been long time residents of Independence would like to know that they have a final resting place here in town.

Mayor Kurtz said let me ask Council a couple of questions and maybe you could help tee it up. Is it everyone's understanding that the property we own up into the Cavs road would be potential long term use for cemetery or just a portion of that?

Chairman Walchanowicz said well that would be my next question. What would it take to prepare the property in the next section where the current gas well sits?

Mayor Kurtz said Jeff Markley has created some different variations. So, that should be the baseline of our discussion. I think what we will do is we will take all the data, we will synthesize it, we will relay it; and then we will come back to Council with suggestions. Then Council will be in a position then to lock into a Master Plan and then we can facilitate appropriating monies to not only determine the different options for burials, the different long term count that we will have available, the ingress and egress, the walls, the fencing and columns and then the long term strategy for maintenance. We also have a few issues there that we can't keep dumping dirt over the hill. We are going to put ourselves in a real tough bind at some point.

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So, I am going to get somebody to own the outcome of this, and then we will come back to Council and share with them everything we have.

Chairman Walchanowicz said thank you Mayor.

Councilperson Narduzzi said so before we leave the cemetery, can I ask another question? Do we apply weed and feed to the cemetery or some kind of weed control because I drive by and it looks like there's snow on the ground there are so many little white flowers everywhere. It just doesn't look appealing when you drive by it.

Service Director Karas said they did apply weed control this past week. So, that was done this past week.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked is it like the first time we have done it?

Service Director Karas said no, typically the contractor does it every year, but this year they got a late start. They did apply it last week.

Councilperson Narduzzi said okay.

Chairman Walchanowicz said I know the clover is bad everywhere, and I think the cemetery is loaded with it.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I like the idea of having someone who takes responsibility for the care of the cemetery like we had a few years back because like you say, you take ownership in the presentability. Right now it's not as nice as it was at one time and everything. It's important to me because I have parents buried there; and most of us do have probably relatives buried there. You would like to have it as presentable as possible and as in good of shape as possible. I think you did say Leon that you do have somebody, but he's not there 24/7 as far as during the week.

Service Director Karas said we have one employee assigned there. That is where he is, his primary responsibility is the cemetery. In the winter time we pull him back. He does snow removal and winter operations. Then he does respond, he still plows it out in the winter time; and he does all the burials.

Mayor Kurtz said we will move forward on that. We will also add the maintenance concerns to the discussion so that we can have a very clear plan for maintenance and the cost associated with that.

Chairman Walchanowicz said I have one more question about the cemetery. I know that Tim Topolski is the main person who handles the cemetery. Do we have somebody else in the Service Department who shadows him from time to time. So, if he is not here or he's on vacation that somebody else can handle his duties, what he typically does on a day-to-day?

Service Director Karas said so typically we have like all summer long we have had Dan Ksiazka assigned to the cemetery along with Tim. Last summer we had someone else. Every year we do

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have a rotation with different employees so the employees can get a better understanding. So, we are not just relying on Tim. We have a number of employees in the Service Department who will be able to help when he's not around or when he's on vacation or whatnot.

Chairman Walchanowicz said perfect. Thank you.

Councilperson Trakas said Mr. Chairman I just kind of wanted to go on record, the Mayor asked a question about the additional acreage over there. I would like to use as much of that for the cemetery that we can so we can assure for the next 100 years basically that it would be cemetery. That would be my druthers, I don't think it would be appropriate to try to sell it for commercial value; and I couldn't imagine us putting some kind of a municipal use there. I think it would be appropriate and kind of a tribute to our community if we would use that for the cemetery expansion and try to be respectful of the fact that people are going to be around a lot longer than we are. We should try to assure the future of the cemetery for as long as we can.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I am in agreement with Jim there too.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I believe in that.

Mayor Kurtz said okay, there's no objection.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked does that complete our cemetery session? Any other questions?

Next on the agenda, I just wanted to give everybody an update. We are going to bring Dennis in, and he's going to give us an update where we stand with GPD. I know there was some time off during this whole Covid-19 we have been dealing with. So, he's going to kind of give us an up to date where we stand with that. Dennis, if you are available.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said this afternoon I spoke with Joe Steinz. He's the Project Manager for GPD, and he is heading up our project. He told me that all the on site investigation has been completed. He said there might be one or two more visits that they have to make, but it's nothing that's going to hold up the project, just some clarifications on buildings or building systems.

He said he expects in two weeks he will have a draft report available at which time he will meet with Technical Service Director Snyderburn, Councilperson Walchanowicz, possibly the Mayor and Finance Director Blaze. What they will do is they will review the report in a draft form. This way if we would like some additional information on any section; even if we want to redact something that is in the report, we have that option available.

After that review, they will have a finalized report in about another two to three weeks, at which time they will make themselves available to do a presentation to the Mayor and Council in any form that the Mayor and Council decides. If they want to do a workshop, do it via Zoom, whatever works for Council and the Mayor at that time.

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He said it's gone very smooth. Overall our buildings and property, he said it's really in excellent shape. He said there were some issues that will need to be addressed, and that's the only clue he gave me as to what is in the report.

So, I think that in two weeks we will do a meeting where the drafts are reviewed. Hopefully, two to three weeks after that, they will have a formal report available; and we can schedule that meeting.

Vice Mayor Grendel said it sounds like we could have a meeting there sometime in August, and maybe it would be nice if Council had, once the report is finalized, we could have like about a week to review it. This way we would be a little more intelligent in our questions with GPD.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said Vice Mayor Grendel, I will ask that they have the report available and schedule the in person or Zoom meeting a week to 10 days after the report is released, the final report.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. Thank you Dennis.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked any other questions about GPD from anyone?

We will move on to Item 3 on the agenda, the property at 6248 Brecksville Road. I know Councilperson Narduzzi had a couple of questions, potential comments on that. Tom did you want to discuss your ideas that you had?

Councilperson Narduzzi said my first reaction was that it would be a perfect spot to have another safety force; and I actually mentioned it to the Mayor. He doesn't believe there is enough room there to do it. I don't know if anybody pays attention to all the sirens that go screaming by the center of town every day, wherever. I just think it's a good, visible buffer to have some kind of safety force as you enter the residential part of the City. I don't know, in my mind, it would be a perfect spot. I just threw that out there to see what anybody else would say. That's really not the reason why I thought we should buy that property, but now that we own it, I am just trying to think of a better use of what we could do with that property than just to put up a fence and make it a little bit safer as far as the water going across 21. I am just throwing it out there. I am just trying to see what else we can come up with for that piece of property.

Chairman Walchanowicz said after we had talked, my thought was for what we had purchased that piece of property for, the value of land obviously on Rockside is much more valuable. If we have property that we can sell on Rockside, why would we not at least look into it on a cheaper piece of property that we had paid for.

Councilperson Veverka asked may I put a couple of thoughts out. When it comes to having an additional facility, of course we have the issue of building it. We have the issue of maintaining of it. We have the issue of staffing it. Considering it's not that far from the main safety center, I would kind of question that. It's an interesting idea Tom, but there's so many costs that would go with it that it would make me reluctant to think that would be a good plan.

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Councilperson Kapusta said if I could add too. I would also like to hear from Chief on this to get his take on the need for, particularly at this juncture and time, when we are still kind of up in the air about any possible changes in how our Rockside Road population will look. So, we may or may not have as much of a need for this as we might have had in the past.

I also would be a little concerned about having it right there next to the adjoining property which will be a residential property still as it is now.

Mayor Kurtz said Mr. Chairman, these are all great comments. There's a lot that goes into a decision such as a remote safety force facility; but I think Councilperson Kapusta hit the nail on the head. I have had conversations with the Chiefs as well as some of the rank and file. We need to reinvest and reinvent ourselves in terms of safety forces on Rockside Road because of the new challenges. We will be putting that together, and we will be discussing it further with Council; but I think Kathleen you hit the nail on the head, the Chiefs and some of the people in the department have very strong opinions with respect on how to manage Rockside Road in the future.

Chairman Walchanowicz said very good.

Councilperson Trakas said Mr. Chairman I have a question. What is the status of the land? Is it in ownership by the City? Is it possible to get an update on that?

Chairman Walchanowicz said Mayor if you could answer on that one.

Mayor Kurtz said I believe Don Ramm or Coral has an update on the various components that we talked about. If they are not on, then I can address that.

City Engineer Ramm said I can speak to a couple of items that were previously discussed. I am not quite sure about the status of the ownership, but I can speak to some of the items. We had looked into the demolition, and we had gotten some quotes for demolition of the structure. There were two proposals that were very similar in cost, around \$15,000 to demolish the home. Then we also looked into some fencing. This is a graphic. There is an existing fence here that the proposed fence would tie into, and we got a quote. Tom Walchanowicz received a quote from Independence Fence, the footage we were looking for was 425 feet. It was close to \$10,000 for a 6' wood board-on-board fence. It was almost double for vinyl.

Mayor Kurtz said let's talk about the most important thing Don, the drainage.

City Engineer Ramm said this is the situation we have here, and we did research some of our information. There is an existing sewer that was built when Rockside/21 was installed. It actually existed according to these plans from 2004. This is the sewer that (inaudible) the street. The existing sewer runs all the way along this southerly line just north of the property line of the parcel we just purchased. So, the sewer itself and two catch basin structures are located on the development property on the north, but it's extremely close to the property line.

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We did have a survey crew find and locate pins; so these two corners are pinned in the field. There is a ribbon towards the woods. Basically, the shrub line, the brush line, the property line runs right through the center of it. So, there are ribbons and stakes all along it. It's tough to walk it because it's encumbered by vegetation. There is supposed to be a shallow swale ditch that runs through the woods. It has been completely filled in, and has had a lack of maintenance over the years. So, I do feel like the first course of action would be to thoroughly clean that swale and help the water stay in there and get into the structures and potentially add one or two more structures on the main itself given some permission and cooperation from the owner of the property here.

Mayor Kurtz said so to answer your questions Mr. Chairman and Members of Council. It's under contract. We are completing our due diligence, and we expect that we will be in a position to proceed. We are continuing to ask, and there's a company that offered services to do an abatement, go through that process for us and not charge us. So, we are going to find different ways to be efficient and effective. The most important things are the drain water issues, security issues, cleaning up the property; and then we will be in a position to do some type of adaptive reuse of the property. One possibility could be to put it back on the market in a situation that we can say what we want there as an interest to our community. We can clean it up. Right now we are going to keep performing our due diligence and report back to Council when we own it.

Chairman Walchanowicz said very good. Thanks Mayor. Thanks Don.

Councilperson Veverka said quick question. Off and on there has been a sign in front of it, a For Sale sign which is kind of strange. Do we know anything about that?

Mayor Kurtz said that was a sign that was put up there. There are several owners on the other side, left hand and right hand; and we were talking with one and the other was unaware that the Purchase Agreement was being acted upon. So, I think it was a communication gap on their side.

Councilperson Veverka said thank you.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked was there anything else about the property on Brecksville Road?

Next is Item 4, Mayor if you want to address this.

Mayor Kurtz said I think Dave Snyderburn and others have some additional data; but the bottom line we have allocated and appropriated money over the past couple of years for security and upgrades to this facility. I think I mentioned once before that the building is going to be 40 years old in 2 years. Although the report that you will receive shortly will outline the condition of the building, the structure, the different components; we have put money aside for the air conditioning system, the heating system. We have also recognized, we have made certain changes to the facility over the last couple of decades to accommodate a more efficient use of the facility. We are, especially with this current situation and the situation outside the doors of City Hall, it's imperative that we begin as soon as possible during this slow period in terms of public

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interaction to incorporate the security measures and some of the functional upgrades that Council has appropriated money for. We would like to get that going as quickly as possible.

The most of it deal with bathroom upgrades, modifications, installations. For example, we have, in theory we are going to close off access to the City Hall portion, similar to what we have with the Police Department. You will be able to enter where the bell is, and you will have access to a modified version, similar to what we have across the hall. We will be putting doors in. We have had conversations with the original architect, Norm Casini. We will put in bulletproof doors, ornamental doors. We will slide the reception area up to the middle. It will be similar to what we have across the hall. We will put a bathroom in that area out by the bell.

How am I doing so far? Does anybody have any questions? I will keep going then.

The original room that was used for the Clerk of Courts when Barb Mack was around, when we originally moved in the building; that would then become a Clerk of Courts additional room because we actually cut an area into the bell area where people if they want to come pay a fine could do it without having to enter or access City Hall. So, it will be a completely closed down area, and the doors would be open obviously on court days and they would be open on Council days and any public meeting days. We would have a Police presence to support the security upgrades.

So, the facility itself, we would be putting those upgrades initially, and cameras and using technology in that room as well as Council Chambers, using additional upgrades of technology so that we could be more efficient and deliver our public presence to the general public more efficiently down the road.

Those are some of the changes. One of the things I have learned sitting here 7 days a week at times. There's no bathroom in the Mayor's office, and so we are going to put a bathroom in the Mayor's office. Norm Casini said there was originally designed, but they didn't put it in.

These are some of the things that we are going to be incorporating into this initial project; and we would like to get this done as soon as possible so that when things loosen up, and we have these public meetings again, we have already incorporated these security and functional upgrades. The receptionist will be in a secure position. Right now we have the gates locked, and it's by appointment only or a reception area discussion through the gates. Hopefully no one has been inconvenienced, but it is just a protocol we put in place during the Covid-19 situation.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked the Finance Director, how much do we have put aside for this already?

Mayor Kurtz said we have two line items, if Vern is not on, we have about \$300,000. I believe Council has appropriated that.

Finance Director Blaze said we have in the mid \$100,000 from prior purchase orders for generically listed City Hall improvements. There is some other money that was allocated for

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General Government security. So, that could be a separate issue. As of right now it's about \$165,000 that is still available for City Hall improvements.

Mayor Kurtz said security is \$127,000 and \$165,000 is what the Finance Director said. So, we have monies available to do these projects and be prepared. When Covid is gone, we will be in a better position, and the entire staff will be much more secure.

Vice Mayor Grendel said you know Mayor I think now is the time to do that with this Covid business, and the foot traffic is down to a minimum there. It would be an ideal time to get these changes made.

Mayor Kurtz said you are exactly right Vice Mayor. That's why it's on the agenda. Some of these things we can do internally with our Tech Service Department. Some of the things we will be able to do through our Purchasing Coordinator. Some of the more expensive, the security items, etc. and some of the structural issues with long lead times such as the bulletproof glass, we will have to bid that out. Thank you because with the reduced foot traffic it's the perfect time for us to do some of these things and not inconvenience everybody.

Vice Mayor Grendel said and it would be nice once we have a set plan in place if we could have a diagram or a more concise plan to visualize in case we need to discuss it with residents and that too. I know you are still putting all that together, and I kind of visualize what you are doing; but it would be nice so that this way, I have a pretty good idea. I think the rest of Council has from your description on what the changes will entail.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you. The concept evolves around, people will have access to the bell area; but they will not have access unless they are granted permission to enter beyond that locked in area. There will be a bathroom there to accommodate those who come pay a ticket. There will be an area where you will be able to pay your ticket from that specific area. If a court case, normally with court cases, the Prosecutor is here; and we already have a Police presence that supports us when we open the gates anyway.

Councilperson Veverka asked a single bathroom, a unisex bathroom?

Mayor Kurtz said yes sir.

Councilperson Kapusta said I have a question. I thought that we were looking at this once before, and that Dennis was working with a group to look at campus wide issues for security, lighting and all these things. Has that been put aside?

Mayor Kurtz said no, I think we are just focusing on the areas that we know we have an issue with right now. The Civic Center, all of our facilities we have to look at; but we are further ahead with some than others.

Councilperson Kapusta said so we now have extracted City Hall from that because that was the whole discussion that we were talking about the needs in various areas; and we were told that it

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was better to look at holistically campus wide, and then once we have that report to make our priorities or our decisions. So, that's why I was asking, are we no longer going down that route?

Mayor Kurtz said from a technology standpoint, it's got to be comprehensive because we want to make sure that our use of the technology and our computers and software are universal in terms of across the campus.

Councilperson Kapusta said compatibility.

Mayor Kurtz said but in terms of the specific security items, that's a building by building discussion; and with the Covid, we are all here, it was easy just to start at City Hall.

Councilperson Kapusta said thank you.

Councilperson Trakas said I wanted to just challenge you a little bit on some of this. As I recall, building out a latrine was maybe \$15,000 to \$30,000; and we have a public latrine right behind the desk there. Do we really need to build one outside by the Liberty bell, and the building has historically not had enough storage, and you don't have enough room for all the people that we have working there. Should we think about that a little bit? If someone really has to go, you can just escort them back to the latrine that's about 20 feet away from there. It would seem to me that it might be something that would make some sense to us.

Mayor Kurtz said the challenge with that is that you would have to let them in City Hall then, and we are talking about the foyer on the east side of the building which is unoccupied and not used. We wouldn't change the footprint of the bell area itself. So, you have to go through that set of doors before you go through the set of doors that goes outside; and on the right hand side there's enough of an area for a unisex bathroom.

Councilperson Trakas said I understand. I am just wondering from the function if there's a better use for that function, and how great of a need would there be to have a latrine out there. We could escort people back. It doesn't seem like we have that big of a rush of people who come into the building who would seem to need that type of a function. I am just looking at it from both a cost and functionality perspective. You have latrines right there. It just seems to be a little bit redundant to me, that's all.

Mayor Kurtz said then they come to the Police Department after hours, and so it would be something that would be available. I am not married to it, but I still think it's more functional. It's safer for sure because I don't think we want to let anybody in without some protection. That's the purpose of the security.

Councilperson Trakas said right, and then the second question I have along those lines are is there, we are talking about security, are there going to be magnetometers for weapon testing when people come in. I know we have the Police Department there so that might be something that makes some sense.

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Mayor Kurtz said we have that portable that we use now. So, we would have that same concept maybe incorporated into one of the doors that we would open when the Police are here. The Police monitor everyone who comes in for a court date.

Councilperson Trakas said well I would just encourage you to take a really hard look at that second latrine out there and just see how much you need it versus having some other higher use for it. When the building was built we almost had no storage from the beginning; so that might be an opportunity. I just encourage you to take a look at that because if you are talking about, we are really talking about the functionality of a building. It's not that functional of a building because of the Council Chambers and a few other things. So, we maybe we ought to take a whole look at that as well while we are examining the security before we move too quickly. It's just my two cents on the matter.

Mayor Kurtz said you are right. That's why we are looking at a new Police station and adaptively reusing that whole Police side for something else; but that's for a discussion down the road. Similar to what Brecksville just did with their City Hall, built a new Police station. They are adaptively reusing that portion of it now. Theirs is about 10 years older than our building. We are just ahead of the curve.

Councilperson Trakas said as usual.

Mayor Kurtz said we are trying to stay on top of it.

If there are no objections, we are going to proceed to putting some stuff together between Purchasing, between Tech Services and the architects. We will put everything together and then obviously Council is going to have to approve the expenditures of this because it's going to exceed my capacity. I think the purpose is to create more secure environments, and there's money appropriated for that. We are going to finally start doing it.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked Mayor did you want to try to get that on July's agenda or August's agenda?

Mayor Kurtz said I am not so sure we will be in a position to do something in July, but with these Zoom meetings, it's a lot easier to call a Council meeting. So, if Council is willing, we can always call it. If we get our footing corrected, and we can always call a meeting. If not, it will probably be August.

Vice Mayor Grendel said you are right. We have been having regular Tuesday meetings which is a good thing. We can always have a Special meeting if necessary. I think this is a great opportunity to get that City Hall security because it's been on our radar for years but never really got much traction. Now is a good time because of the situation for your staff and the architects to get something together. Again, we never thought about security in 1982 when the building was built, it wasn't an issue. You could walk right in and walk around and not worry about your well-being. Now it's a lot different world. So, I applaud that you are getting this moved forward. It's been on the books for a number of years.

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Mayor Kurtz said thank you, and we have good people who really care about wanting to do this right. So, we will continue on this course as long as Council is accepting of that.

Chairman Walchanowicz said thank you.

Councilperson Narduzzi said we have been talking about this for at least 10 years. I think we are long overdue to have something accomplished because you cannot walk into any other City Hall anywhere and be able to walk back to be able to talk to the Mayor, the Directors, walk into the Mayor's office. It just doesn't happen anymore. I think we are a little bit behind in that aspect. So, I am all in favor of moving forward as fast as possible, and it is the best time to accomplish this in these crazy times we are living in now. So, that's my two cents.

Mayor Kurtz said I appreciate that.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked anybody else? Okay, let's move on the Item 5, the dog park.

Mayor Kurtz asked someone wants a dog park?

Chairman Walchanowicz said that's what I am hearing.

Mayor Kurtz said just kidding. Actually, Rec Director Walchanowicz if you would want to take over the idea.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said this idea has been brought up, if I'm not mistaken, for a good 7 years now. It has been bounced around back and forth. In fact, I think one time it was on the Five-Year Capital without any dollar amount on it, but then it was taken off. We tried to make due with our fields here. We have two enclosed fields that we would let people go on, but since last fall the popularity of canines, especially this past spring with everybody being locked down. People on the nice days are allowed out to venture out, and we are just getting inundated with everybody on the fields with their dogs.

So, this past spring we took a day and went around and tried to find the right place for a dog park. We think we came up with a pretty good idea and a pretty good size of one, one for large dogs and one for small dogs. Debi, do you have that drawing so you can screen share?

The Clerk of Council put the drawing up on the screen.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I know this even goes back to George Klepacz was an advocate of a dog park back during his 10 year tenure.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said correct. This is not a new idea.

Vice Mayor Grendel said although if you recall, when we had those meetings with Fairmont, maybe it was the other group. Maybe it was the most recent group, that dog park came in very low on what people wanted; but that was before the pandemic.

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Recreation Director Walchanowicz said what we kind of came up here with is it's not a permanent location; but I think it will get us by until at least maybe we purchase some extra property in the park here. The idea is using the old middle school property, and actually it will be the grassy area which is directly to the east of the Kindl properties.

Mayor Kurtz said it's the green grass area between the Kindl's property and the parking area that the school used to utilize. Is that right Tom?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said correct. It would be basically 225 feet by 115 feet. So, we would divide that into two areas, one for large dogs, one for small dogs. I got some preliminary pricing from some fence contractors. That would be the biggest cost to this is obviously a fence.

Mayor Kurtz asked could it be designed so that we can re-utilize it, take it with us?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said yes, exactly. So, the fence, again if it gets us by for a few years, 5 years possibly until there's a Master Plan for that downtown area.

Mayor Kurtz said you know Tom maybe 2 years, come on. You are killing me.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said this fencing would be repurposed if we needed to. It would be easy to locate. I got a price for a galvanized fence and also a black vinyl coated fence. The lowest price was about close to \$18,000. So, what we would need, we would need signage and maybe some obstacles for the canines; it would be around a \$20,000 budget. We can do this project then. Again, we can repurpose that fence if we did relocate it to another property down the road.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked Recreation Director Walchanowicz have you looked into other dog parks in Cuyahoga County and how they operate? I have a handful of concerns that just bother me to think that other people are going to be using this park besides residents. So, how do you keep them out? I am sure that Independence residents have their dogs vaccinated, but who's to say that someone who comes in from the outside isn't vaccinated or has all the proper shots. The biggest thing that gets me is that everybody in Independence has yards. We don't have apartments, we don't have condominiums. Your dog can run around in your backyard. I don't know. I just think it's going to cause more problems for the handful of people who are going to use it.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I feel those are issues.

Councilperson Narduzzi said if it's a problem with the dogs running on the field, put an end to it. Stop that so they can't use that baseball field to let their dogs run. To create something that's going to give us another problem, I don't know if I'm for that or not. I don't think it's a big concern, just like when we had that, when they were going to put it in the center of town up there.

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Vice Mayor Grendel said you are right Tom. It was one of the lowest demands was for a dog park.

Councilperson Narduzzi said it's not we are New York City, and there's no place to go, it's all concrete. Everybody here has a yard. If your yard is not big enough for your dog, then maybe you should consider not having a dog. Do you know what I'm saying? I don't know. It would create more problems than it's going to do good.

Councilperson Veverka said I totally agree with your thoughts related to having animals coming from other places; and the other concern would be if you have a designated dog park how do you take care of things like canine distemper and other things related to disease and the involvement of dogs picking up more disease from other dogs, particularly when you have a large population beyond residents.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said well you do all have valid points, but I will say that there are a lot of people who bring their dogs down here and use these fields. We did pull the gates off this past fall and into early spring because it just got out of hand. If we do shut the fields down totally to the dogs, there are going to be some upset people. I just wanted to let you know that. If we don't find another area for them, again it's to help satisfy a need. It's up to Council.

Councilperson Trakas said quickly. I am open to the idea, and I think there is a need. It may not be the most pressing need, but I understand where Tom is coming from. There are people who do bring their dogs, and it would be nice to have a place for them. Could we think about maybe the Hemlock Trail. Every time I'm on the Hemlock Trail there's people, it seems like out of 10 people you have 3 of them are walking a dog on the trail. Would it be possible to perhaps direct people who want to walk their dogs in a public space to the trail because it seems like people are doing it anyway; and then to the points that Councilperson Narduzzi and Veverka raise, those are pretty valid points about making sure the dogs are not spreading disease or vicious or that type of thing which you are always going to get. I like the idea. I kind of think we already have something pretty close to that on the Hemlock Trail, and was wondering Tom what you thought about that.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said Jim, you're right. It's the same thing in the park too, people walk their dogs; but the thing about a dog park is you can let your dog go and run off a leash. That's the difference between a dog park itself and the trail or our paths around the park here. People want to let their dog off and just run, throw a ball, stuff like that. That's the difference with a dog park.

Mayor Kurtz said I think Councilperson Synek still didn't weigh in.

Councilperson Synek said I applaud you Tom for your efforts in putting this together. My daughter has finally moved out, and she has her own dog now. She decided to get one during this pandemic; but where she lives in Columbus, they do have a dog park around there. What I have come to appreciate is how a dog park is a point of social connection for not only the dog, but it would create the opportunity for social connection. It is a very high and admirable goal for

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us as a City, and I support it from that standpoint because the opportunity of bringing people together of like values, like interests, dog owners, we create an opportunity for social connection. The last three months have shown the need for that. The absence of it is quite painful, and the opportunity to have more of that is a good thing. I think it's a great location. It's near major roads. There's parking nearby. There's always the concern is it going to be overrun by non-residents. Well that could happen at Elmwood Park, and we seem to manage that okay. That promotion of social connection, a safe place for people to bring their dogs; and I think it's a great amenity that could be had. High public value, high public use at relatively little cost; so I think it's a great endeavor.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said thanks.

Mayor Kurtz asked who hasn't weighed in yet?

Councilperson Kapusta said I haven't. I think it's something worth looking at. I don't know that I feel it's a high priority item in today's economic times.

Mayor Kurtz said the only reason we are suggesting this is because it's a low barrier cost wise, and a number of residents in that area applauded the suggestion. So, is it the issue of the location or the fact that you just don't think it's a good idea?

Councilperson Kapusta said I don't think it's a bad idea, I just don't think prioritizing it's a high interest item because again I will reflect back to what Dave and I and a couple of other Councilpersons said. When we did have that survey of downtown, and this was a resident response survey, that came out very low on the list. I would like to maybe revisit that actual survey so we can look at it again, but I thought I remembered it as not being of a high interest by the residents who responded.

Mayor Kurtz said Councilperson Kapusta you make a very good point, but I said again, and I think the Rec Director also reiterated, this is an interim use. We are not talking about a permanent use of a downtown area for a doggie park. The thought was if we could get some energy, get some social interaction, get people to have something else to go to do and do with their dog during this time specifically. The thought was we have the property, we have it almost perfectly laid out because we don't have to make any major installations other than a fence. I have been assured the fence will be able to be reused. It just offers another thing for our residents to do; and if in two years we are relocating it or we are developing the downtown area, I will be the happiest guy. I want to assure everybody, and I will reinforce this to the public, that this is an interim use. I do not believe the downtown area will be a permanent use for this. I don't think it's in the best long term use, but it certainly gives us some flexibility and to see how much use it's going to get.

Vice Mayor Grendel said that's what I was going to say Mayor. This is a good chance for us to monitor to see if there really is an interest in it. If there is, then we can look at a more permanent location, but like I said, I know a few years ago it was low priority; but things have changed with the pandemic and everything else. I see more people walking dogs than I ever did in my life. So, this might be a good chance to see if there's an interest in how it goes with residents. I

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would like to see, hopefully it would be mainly used by our residents. Again, liability issues, I don't know how those work, if there is an incident or that, how the City is not on the hook for somebody getting bitten or other things happening. I think it's a good way to test to see if there really is an interest in this, and we could monitor the usage of it over a period of a year or two.

Mayor Kurtz said absolutely, and the other thing is that survey I believe was for the downtown area, the low priority for a doggie park. I believe that, I can't believe I'm saying this, but Councilperson Klepacz was passionate about it. He believed that there was a community interest, the majority that would really participate and utilize it. So, my only thought was that we have an opportunity, low barrier to entry to test the waters. If in fact we go to redevelop this in a couple of years, and we realize wow we really better find a place because there's a lot of usage, then cats will get in the way, and we will be in good shape.

Councilperson Veverka asked can I throw one more thought in. As we are evaluating, that particular location is directly adjacent to a resident, right next to it, residents across the street; and just wondering about any sound issues. If it's very popular, that will mean lots of dogs barking, and I know that for some people can be extremely annoying. So, that location, an interesting place to start; but it might be better someplace in the park away from any residents' homes. I know most of us probably wouldn't like to have it directly adjacent to our home.

Mayor Kurtz said well actually I talked to one of the residents across the street when I was there one day surveying the property, and she had her dog. I said what if we converted this to a doggie park, and she was all excited about it. She said all my neighbors have dogs, it would be great.

Councilperson Veverka said well cool.

Mayor Kurtz said again, that's a small survey. No cats allowed, but it's a small survey. Again, I applaud the fact that the Rec Director is always flexible in terms of always coming up with different ideas. When we presented it, he jumped on board, and I never want to discourage anyone who has an idea. If it wasn't a lower barrier to entry, we had the property; and it was going to be something we can put our toe in the water. I never thought of the socialization aspect, but you know what, you are right. People from other communities have said that it's a gathering place. So, I will check with Greg O'Brien on the liability, but we are talking about \$20,000, whatever the majority of Council wants to do.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said one thing that's nice about this. It is kind of hidden from 21 so non-residents driving by it's going to be hard to see. We are going to promote it for our residents. You can't see this area very clearly from 21 which I think is a nice thing.

Councilperson Trakas asked how do these parks work functionally? Do you have to have an employee there? Who cleans up the inevitable products that come from the animals? How does that work?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said everything that I looked into, the signage is up; and it's at your will. It's not going to increase our overhead as far as operating costs. No employee will be there. We will cut that grass just like we do now. So, there will be no cost once the fence is

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up. It's all upon the people to clean up after themselves just like here in the park on the ballfields.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked will we have those like in the park here we have those little stations where we have the bags and the specific can that it goes into? Will we have a couple of those in that location?

Mayor Kurtz said yes, and there's a list of rules that we would post.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said correct.

Mayor Kurtz said I'm looking at some of them now. It pretty clearly outlines your responsibility. Dog owners are responsible for accident or injury inflicted by their pet. Don't allow your dog to harass other dogs. Clean up after your dog. There's a number of rules that are important that we post.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked is it possible to have somebody from another city that has a dog park that could give us a little bit of a personal experience with that just to give us an idea how it is operating. I don't know what other community has one, but it would be kind of nice to get a practical review from somebody that has experience with it.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said I could do that.

Mayor Kurtz said Tom talk to other groups, and then you can further that. I guess I just wanted to hear, and what we will do is we will put together some additional information. If we can raise the comfort level in the next couple of weeks, and maybe you can give us a motion to approve at the July Council meeting if we can satisfy the majority of Council's concerns. We will address these between now and next week. We will address these issues.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. Thank you Mayor.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked was there anything else on the dog park?

Then finally if there were any other matters. Does anybody have anything that they want to discuss that wasn't on the agenda?

Mayor Kurtz said Mr. Chairman we have a number of initiatives that the Administration is reviewing and searching and seeking out. We have had meetings late with a number of different people. We are trying to advance the ball in several areas. It's premature at this point to discuss it, but I would ask that you would be willing to call a meeting necessitated by some of these things coming to the point where it needs action by Council.

Chairman Walchanowicz said okay. Just let me know when Mayor, and we will have it done.

Mayor Kurtz said the takeaway from the meeting, just to sum it up if I may, the Master Plan for the cemetery, we are going to put that together. We are going to worry about how to manage the

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Master Plan as well as the maintenance of the cemetery. GPD is going to put their presentation together informally in two or three weeks; and then we will get a copy of it out to Council once they have had a chance to tweak it. We will get that out probably two or three weeks after that. The 6248 Brecksville Road, we will continue to do our due diligence, and we will be able to outline some options for that as we get answers to some of these questions. City Hall, we are going to proceed with the architect, and we are going to proceed with security upgrades as well as functional upgrades. The dog park, we are going to get some answers to the questions about liability, about what other parks are doing; and we will get that to Council sooner rather than later. Did I miss anything?

Several people said no.

Mayor Kurtz said okay, we have a lot of work to do.

Chairman Walchanowicz said the only thing I had left was, and just for Tom and Dave Snyderburn. If you guys have a chance to just walk through some of the dugouts throughout the park; the gates aren't closing real well. It's kind of mandatory now with the whole Covid thing that the gates need to be completely closed, and then there are some broken outlets in some of the dugouts. So, I have some concern with the kids and water. Also there are some broken fence brackets on some of the diamonds; if we could just kind of get that cleaned up so none of the kids get hurt on any of that stuff.

Mayor Kurtz said we will look into that. In the future, if you want to relay that to me I would appreciate it so that we can on a more timely basis get it taken care of, not wait for a committee meeting to facilitate some of these things, especially as they relate to safety.

Chairman Walchanowicz said okay.

If that's it, we can adjourn the Public Lands & Buildings meeting of July 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Moved by Narduzzi, seconded by Trakas, to adjourn the Public Lands & Buildings meeting of July 1, 2020. Voice Vote: 3 yes/0 no; motion carried.**

There being no further business, the Public Lands & Buildings meeting of July 1, 2020 was adjourned at 5:54 p.m.