

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
AUGUST 11, 2022 AT 4:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CAUCUS ROOM & VIA ZOOM**

Present: Chairperson Anthony Togliatti
Councilperson John DiGeronimo
Councilperson Chris Walchanowicz

Also Present: Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz (arrived at 4:45 p.m.)
Vice Mayor Dave Grendel
Recreation Director Tom Walchanowicz
Community Services Director Emily Thomas
Community Services Assistant Director Amber Veverka
Service Director Ron McKinley
Procurement Coordinator Dennis Zdolshek
Recreation Department Employee Linda Farace

Chairperson Togliatti called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

Chairperson Togliatti said before we jump into the agenda, I just want to give a hats off to both Emily and Tom and everyone within their department and every department in the City for the hard work and effort and everything that went into Home Days. It really was spectacular. I have heard nothing but positive comments and remarks. So, thank you guys you did a great job.

Historically these meetings have been quarterly, but Tom and I met early on in the year and because he had so much going on in his department and with Emily being relatively new, we decided that a mid-year and end of year recap would probably be sufficient unless the committee or anyone else on Council wants more meetings. So, that's what we talked about, and we also talked about holding it off until after Home Days because this was the first year that the Community Services Department was really spearheading Home Days, so they had a lot on their plate, and they can breathe easy now until Fall Fest.

So with that, we will jump into the Community Services Department mid-year update.

Community Services Director Thomas began her Power Point presentation.

So again, just wanted to as Chairperson Togliatti shared, just provide an update on the happenings of our Community Services team. I just completed my one year anniversary, and with this great team, just to be a part of the Community Services team, but the City as a whole.

I just want to review the services that we currently offer and share some of the things that we adapted or changed since the beginning of the year, and I will also share a little bit about things to come.

Community Services, we offer daily welfare checks, Life Alert system, lock box program. Really between those three services I would say since I have been in this role, we saved at least three lives with the programs that we have. Our team calls, and if we don't hear from residents on the welfare checklist, it's been a really impactful program and we have seen value of that to not only the residents we serve but their family members who are grateful that we check up on them. We can tell how they are doing from day to day.

We have seen the rentals with the pandemic shifting a little bit. There has been an increase in wheelchair rentals and walker rentals, and again just providing a valuable service in times of need, whether that's long term, short term.

Our Meals on Wheels Program, we are partnering with Vista Springs. They have increased the nutritional value of it so we have received more positive feedback. They got new chefs, changed the meals, and so previously people were a little bit hesitant to go on that program because they weren't sure about the change.

Transportation services, we did hire a part-time transportation driver, Bob Samerigo, who has proved to be incredibly vital to our team. The residents can't speak more highly of him. We get phone calls all the time about what a terrific driver he is. He is always timely, he's helpful, but he is a resident himself and really loves to give back to the community. So, we have seen an increase in transports as well, especially to people with dialysis, we have seen a number of residents in our community be happy with that.

Councilperson DiGeronimo asked do you have any numbers Emily like Meals on Wheels, that's an every day?

Community Services Director Thomas said so it's an every day option, it goes Monday through Friday. It's \$5.50 a meal. So, we have on an ongoing basis probably 25 consistently that are on the program, not every day. We have some people who are Monday through Friday, some who are Monday, Wednesday and Friday, or Tuesday or Thursday, just depending on the nature of their week.

Councilperson DiGeronimo are the deliverers volunteers?

Community Services Director Thomas said yes from Vista Springs. It's either volunteers with them or sometimes the Vista Springs team members themselves will deliver. They handle the execution of the program. The residents call us after they receive their menu, we confirm their dietary needs. We do the billing on our side, and Vista Springs (inaudible).

Councilperson DiGeronimo said and like the transportation services, is it an every day?

Community Services Director Thomas said Bob is here five days a week.

Councilperson DiGeronimo asked on the hour, as needed, on schedule?

Community Services Director Thomas said it varies from day-to-day. Monday, Wednesday and Friday he's probably working 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or 5:00 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays tend to be our slow days. He might come in closer to 9:00 a.m., and he's typically gone by 1:00 p.m. or 1:30 p.m.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said so he's pretty full-time.

Community Services Director Thomas said he's at that 28 hour mark that we like to keep all of our part-time people on. He was great for Home Days as well. He was here driving shuttles too, but we do try to watch his hours just to be respectful. He's a tremendous service there. Some people have asked previously why don't we hire another driver. The reality is we don't have quite enough work to just have a second part-time driver, but I drive occasionally. Jen Vitron our Community Resource Manager will drive as needed. We try to schedule it so that we are not denying anybody transportation services.

Indy Assist, you may have known this as Chore Helpers previously. So, we brought that back with the new year. It's something that we have seen again grow from our older adults, leaf raking, small home repairs. So, we have a small list that we continue to build and increase as we get inquiries from people who are interested in being on the list. We continue to add and seek out services if a resident calls looking for something. It might not be something on our list currently, but we will go out and try to seek that out.

Welcome Wagon with new residents and babies, we have that.

We continue room rentals and reservations, and we have seen an increase now in people coming back wanting to utilize those facilities.

Adult and senior programs, some of these will be very familiar to you, but Better Balance, is actually the class that has been so popular that we added a Wednesday class as well. We are seeing our active adults are looking for opportunities to exercise. We have an average of about 22 people enrolled on Mondays, and as the word is getting out about the Wednesday class, we have seen an increase in those numbers as well.

Our lunch programs include our Tuesday lunch currently, our every other week Wednesday drive-thru lunches, and then our Friday lunches as well and then our monthly lunches. Our numbers are not back to where they were pre-pandemic for a variety of reasons, whether residents have passed away or their comfortability coming back into the building; but we are going to meet with them actually next Friday just to kind of pick our adults' brains about where they are at, how they are feeling about things, ask them about what is preventing their friends from coming back into that. We moved away over the last year from some of the frozen foods that we were doing to more homemade things, and then increased the nutritional value of our meals as well. We had been asking residents for their feedback after every meal so that we know what's working, what is not working, what they like and what they don't like.

Chairperson Togliatti asked how are the numbers on the Wednesday drive-thru?

Community Services Director Thomas said so last year they were close to that 300 or 400. This year they are at 200 to 250. So, we are going to see through the end of this year and kind of re-evaluate that program if we will continue to offer those or if we could utilize our resources better. It's still 150 to 200, obviously more than we are seeing in person, and again I think it's a comfortability thing with people returning, but it's nice that we are seeing residents that we don't see on a daily basis because a lot of the people that come for our programs are the same people that we see every day.

Our movies and bingo, so if you weren't aware, we are playing cash bingo at the Civic Center for a very small amount of money. So, that was a very exciting thing for our residents. So, they end up winning a couple of bucks a game because we are capped at the amount of money that we can bring in and then give back out. That was very exciting. For that group we have about 12 people who consistently come to that, and that fluctuates a little bit. We have our volunteer bingo callers, so people were very that excited about that cash. I know they were excited about bingo as well.

Our movies and munchies, our Wednesday movie programs, this summer we did it a little bit different. We went with family friendly movies as well as animated films. So, we saw a little bit of a different shift in the crowds there with not as many older adults coming to that but more families that came. It was exciting to see kids with their grandparents, and the parents had something for them to do during the summer.

Chair yoga and general yoga, these are different opportunities for people to be active.

Our City bus trips, we are averaging about one bus trip a week, whether that's to a restaurant, to a play, to a winery, to Chagrin Falls. We have some very well attended trips where we have a packed charter bus and have people on the wait list. We really are just trying different things, and that's what 2022 has been all about, just trying new things, taking feedback from that survey, seeing what sticks because sometimes people will say they want something and the reality is when it comes to executing that, it might not be what the whole community wants. We will continue to re-evaluate our City bus trips and are looking to do more family-based ones as well. That connotation of that being a senior event (inaudible).

Then there's some miscellaneous programming that we have based on feedback. So, the Sip and Knit, that sold out twice over back at the beginning of the year. The Pierogi Party based on some feedback from residents, and that was sold out as well. The Polish Language class which we had about 12 people that came for the eight week course, and that's a commitment. We did a safe boating course, and then we do our twice a month blood drive as well. We have a great relationship with the American Red Cross.

Then our community resources, so with Jen Vitron coming on as a Community Resource Manager, we really upped our health and wellness initiatives and the different types of opportunities we had for residents to explore the different facets of (inaudible), whether that's as an older adult, as a parent.

So, we started out the new year with our first annual wellness week which we will bring back. It was a week full of different wellness activities that we heavily promoted. We have done foot screenings with our older adults at the Civic Center. Sometimes people can't get to the doctor, so that was highly popular. We sold out every time, so I am actually going to go back to the podiatry school and say can we bring somebody out or do more?

We did goat yoga with the Independence High School. You can see the students in that picture, just to try to engage with that age group. Growing nutrient dense foods, (inaudible) techniques which is a different way to relieve stress. Health and wellness fit (inaudible) with the Fitness Doctor who has that business on Brecksville Road. He had approached us about doing something with the community, and so we did a seminar, actually livestreamed it. We had about 9 people online and about 13 people in person, just asking different questions and covering different topics.

We talked about sleep, we talked about how humor is helpful for stress levels. We participated in the primary school mental health day which is the picture on the right-hand side. We did social wellness, splitting kids into teams and had to build a marshmallow tower and talked about the importance of social wellness and mental health.

Reiki which is another, it's a new-age so to speak opportunity, we had a resident reach out. We did an informational session. We had eight people show up for that. So, again, just trying new things and seeing what sticks.

The Western Reserve Agency, we did seminars. There are two examples here about planning for people with disabilities in their families and estate plan. Again, topics that our residents have reached out to us about, hey we want to know more about this, and we find resources, whether that's us or actively reaching out, or them coming to us and saying we are offering this.

One of the things that we are most proud of this is year is the mental health training for our Community Services team, members of that team, employees across the City. They participate and are certified in mental health training for both adults and youth. It's how you deal with these mental health crises, and how you start to identify them before they get to the point of being a crisis.

The other thing is the My Medicare Network Connection. So, a lot of people in our community have questions about Medicare and how that works. Prior to the pandemic, a contact reached out about offering the services, and we were able to have Jen talk about Medicare 101, not only for our community but the greater community. So, she is really helping our residents and our community navigate through this.

Youth and family programming, again before school, after school and all day care are all kind of ongoing programs that we have that you are all familiar with. We are finding ways to fine-tune those, getting our staff trained, an overview of mental health training with how do you deal with these kind of different social behaviors that we are seeing.

Just updating the registration process so it's a smoother and easier process for parents to register for these programs.

Funtastic Fridays, we have increased the volume of programming so that there is something every Friday night at the Civic Center during the school year. The first Friday is our pizza parties that sell out every time, and we have to add additional spots.

Family Fun Nights, and whether it's a movie night or game night.

Then primary school and middle school, so we have specifically a dedicated Friday night for that K-4 age range for activities, and then we replicate that with the other school age appropriate. So, the Harry Potter theme for example because we really haven't had a program in the middle school. We started to build that in the past year.

Pre-school programs, a Time for Us, those programs sell out time and time again, and then we did some more pre-school pop up programs. Sometimes even with a small cost, a Time for Us can be prohibitive to some families, and so we offer these pop ups that allows different parents to get involved and to socialize their kid and meet other parents.

Summer programming, summer playground and then day camp. The summer playground was the highest number ever with 150 kids this year. We expanded the program offerings, and idea camp (inaudible). So, we had between the two programs almost 300 kids enrolled in those.

Other things that we are trying like the polite dining etiquette and City bus trips.

Special events, so Amber ran a very successful craft fair earlier this year. We had a number of vendors, local and outside of the City come, and showcased their talents. We are bringing that back again in the fall.

Our Bunny Trail, I think some of your families were in attendance. It was originally planned to be outside, but because of the weather we made a change to inside, and it was highly successful. It was a real team effort.

Our volunteer appreciation luncheon, National Day of Prayer, our Memorial Day Services, the Farmers Market.

Then there are capital projects. I know we kind of talked about these time and time again at other meetings. So, recently we ordered new rugs for the atrium. They needed to be replaced because they were a tripping hazard. Everything is really nice. The atrium furniture which Council approved, so we got that legislation today, and we are moving forward with that and should have it by the new year.

The kitchen renovation grant project, our initial proposal was approved by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, so the final agreement is with our legal team now to review, and then we should be in good shape to move forward and have that.

Just the repainting of the banquet rooms that we talked about before. They had incorrect paint and supplies, so they are coming back in September to make sure we get the right type of paint, the right color, and that will be finished in October.

Then just some miscellaneous items that we are working on, the 25 and Alive rebranding. We have been giving our input there and kind of getting the brain trust if you will just feedback on the mission. You will receive more information about that soon.

Then Youth for Christ. The legislation was passed this week. We are talking about how we can maximize those hours that we have with the Campus Life, really trying to focus on that middle school programming and that time right after school, whether it's (inaudible) or the kids that aren't involved in activities, how can we bring them to the Civic Center and utilize Jim Eller and his team.

I went longer than I planned, but that covers everything.

Chairperson Togliatti said very thorough. It is interesting how we have stepped up our stress reduction programs and mental health programs and all of those services related since the pandemic. We are adjusting appropriately it seems.

Community Services Director Thomas said yes, it was something when I first started that I knew was important, and it has been reiterated from the community members that I work with in the school, and so just working to provide opportunities to care for every aspect.

Chairperson Togliatti asked and do we as a Community Services Department work with the schools intervention specialist at all for any of our programming?

Community Services Director Thomas said we do. So, Jen meets monthly with the social worker at the school to talk about the ongoing issues, and then we work I would say more on a case-by-case basis throughout the year with the intervention specialist. In the summer they actually come and do some training with our counselors in both programs just to make sure that everybody is understanding the different issues that are going on in the school because we share the same kids that may come in the summer. We have reached out, and we have (inaudible). We have actually been able to work with the school to get information so the parent can actually contact the school to share more information which helps.

Chairperson Togliatti said great. Anyone from the committee have any questions?

Councilperson DiGeronimo said maybe the second to last, but all the programs the team is doing seem very busy, so if there's a thought of doing something more. What is the thought process? We would like to do another program, what are the constraints at this point? If you want to do something more, do you say we don't have the time, the space? We don't have the participation, I would rather get some volunteers to do this. Do we add a program and then have to drop a program? Kind of walk through some of those decisions.

Community Services Director Thomas said so I think, and Amber can probably confirm this, I mean where I came from your plate never got bigger, it just got taller; and so we worked through some of those challenges that you are talking about. So, for example, Breakfast with Santa, the Bunny Trail, and there's another event that is escaping me, I actually planned because our team was getting adjusted to all of these pre-school programs that we were doing. So, we have been slowly but surely elevating our current programs, and as we have expanded, we just kind of shared responsibilities across the department. So, once everybody gets a handle on it, and they feel comfortable and understand what the expectation is, then we will be re-allocating those responsibilities.

From a space standpoint, we prioritize our Community Services programs first from a reservation perspective, and I haven't run into too many challenges from a space perspective. Time is obviously the factor that always impacts us as we increase programs, but we have actually (inaudible) our part-time staff as well. We have a core group that work year round with us that had set out to take on additional hours. So, we might plan a program, but we are not the one that is really executing it on a daily basis.

Financially, we have great resources. I am sure that I overly budgeted for this past year. I just wanted to make sure we were comfortable, and we can re-evaluate that for next year. We have tried a lot of things too, and I think that as opposed to starting like a six week program, we did a test here and test there and are seeing what sticks this year. Then trying to think about okay this didn't stick so it's not worth us pursuing again until we better understand why this was not successful. Or this was very highly attended, and we want to try to implement that a little bit more.

We have also looked at what are our team's strongest skillsets and where can we kind of outsource other opportunities like a magician. None of us in our Community Services are expert magicians, so why don't we bring in somebody to do that. We put a (inaudible) course that we ran over, and that's not an area that any of us are experts in so we were like our community is asking for this, we know somebody who can do that, let's implement that. It also is just a test to see what the community's response is to it as well because as you know, our programs are very high quality at a very reasonable price, and when you look at outside programs, that's not always the case. So, we are testing some of those things. Okay, so the etiquette course was in the \$30 to \$40 range, but we had people commit to that. So, we know what kind of our threshold is. We try to offer things that are a little bit more expensive for families, and it just doesn't work. So, let's just try new things as opposed to rushing in, so we have been able to counteract some of those potential challenges. If you ask me and ask Amber next year, we might have a different answer for you, but right now, there's nothing holding us back.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said alright, thanks.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I heard from a lot of my clients and people, so many things about Ms. Vitron what she has added. That was a void that the City had for a number of years. Every aspect, her disposition, the way she treats people, and she is an asset to the City. Thank goodness we finally got a person in there. Kathleen held that down for many years, and now we have that same quality. Like I said, I don't hear too many complaints about the department, but we have

heard that the compliments are on a tremendous uptake during the last year with you and Amber and your staff, a lot of good things. Keep up the good work. The great work that you guys do make our jobs a lot easier too.

Community Services Director Thomas said I couldn't have stepped into a better team with Amber and I in the leadership role and Jen coming on board, and Lori and Claudia and Erin and Rita and Marcia; that's an incredible group to walk into. It's been a great experience for me, and I think it's been reflected in the community.

Vice Mayor Grendel said you enjoy working together too, there's no animosity, and everybody is pulling in the same direction and really the results are great.

Chairperson Togliatti said and you mentioned the in-person lunch numbers are down, they are not quite pre-pandemic levels. How about the room rentals, are they still slow?

Amber Veverka said the private rentals are slow, and so we are just scheduling on the weekend as needed just when rentals occur. At any normal summer, we might have three to eight rentals on a weekend. Now we are looking at maybe one to three. So, it's just kind of sporadic now. I am not really sure, people just aren't comfortable having parties now, or more people are having parties at home. The prices haven't changed, so I am not really sure the reason.

Councilperson DiGeronimo asked so do you think it's just the Civic Center facilities?

Amber Veverka said I only know about our rooms. I am not sure if Tom has noticed.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we have been doing pretty good as far as the Elmwood Rec.

Linda Farace said it hasn't been too much, possibly a little slower but not by a lot.

Several people began speaking at once.

Linda Farace said I actually think Liberty has been used more this year than it has in the past.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we have a lot of kids birthday parties there because of the playground.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said you had mentioned a few months back about looking into when people rent the banquet rooms where they could bring in beer and wine. Where have you gone with that?

Community Services Director Thomas said so we haven't looked into that further. There's been a little bit of feedback from the community. For example, we talk about Home Days in the Kiwanis pavilion, and we talked a little bit about this. For example, a liquor permit holder has the ability to allow people to bring in their families. There is a hesitancy there because as a parent you can serve your child alcohol in a public space. Kiwanis doesn't have to serve you, and

certainly not serve your child, but there is some resistance to that. So, we are kind of taking that a little bit slower just because if it's not something that the community really wants, I think there are very strong feelings and mixed feelings about that. So, we are just kind of pursuing that slower. Seven Hills did it recently, so we do have that legislation that we are going to look at. There are still some things to be worked through and talked about. So, I think probably at our end of year, we will bring it back up to further discuss.

Chairperson Togliatti said well thank you very much Emily and Amber. Now we will go to Agenda Item 2, the Recreation Department mid-year update.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we have a little Power Point also.

Capital Improvements, this past year we had a very busy spring. We had two big projects, one being the splash pad and the other one the bocce ball court renovation. The splash pad we started in the beginning of March, and the opening was when the pool opened. We were able to accomplish that surprisingly with all the things that we had going against us as far as results of the pandemic with the hard to get products and items and the shortages and everything and the prices going up. So, we really went through some tough times. Luckily, a lot of the stuff we ordered ahead. First of all, Council I appreciate passing this. I think you passed this at the end of last year, and we got a jump on ordering all this stuff from the vendor we used for this, Rain Drop Products which is in Mansfield. So, all this stuff was made in Ohio. I always tell my staff all the time, try to buy from Ohio companies, United States companies. We try to keep everything as local as we can. So, actually all the features were here in February, and so we were able to get in all the stuff which was good because after we got all of our stuff, they were talking about all the nightmares. There were a lot of things that were not able to be shipped.

The fence was on back order. There was a 15-week backlog on the fence, but we got that in. The fence got delivered. I think the fence was delivered May 8th, and the fence company, we used the guy out of Seven Hills, Independence Fence. He put the fence in.

In a lot of regards we were lucky. We did a lot of stuff in-house, between our department, Ron's department, Technical Service Department, Dave Snyderburn. We were able to do a lot of us, and I just want to point out here this is the computerized control that controls the splash pad. That controls all of the features of the splash pad, and all the spray operates through this computer.

Now John have you taken your kids there?

Councilperson DiGeronimo said my kids have been there, I have not.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said as we went along, what was nice about us kind of like operating as a general contractor, after doing this, (inaudible). We ended up with this rendering not being what was originally planned. It was tweaked a little bit. We have a lot more concrete out there. We actually added a little bit of grass. So, we were able to make it how we wanted it. The compliments that we get from the people that come here. They didn't realize this was just added because the layout is basically the same as far as the walkway walking off the parking lot

into the pool area. It was all laid out basically the same. That little bit of grass matches the little bit of grass on this side of the pool complex. Again, I just think, I'm very happy the way this all came together. It laid out nice. It's not crowded, as far as being cramped or anything. Again, I can't thank Ron enough, Dave also.

I know it was brought up about a heater, and we are going to look in the off-season about possibly heating it, 99% of splash pads aren't heated. I know we have some people that are asking about putting in a heater for this. So, we are going to look at that in the off-season.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked are you going to leave this open after the pool closes?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said it's one of the last slides. I am going to show you what we are going to have on the gates. So, the pool is going to close on September 10th, and we will keep this open through possibly October 15th. If we get more than 75 degree temperature days, it will be open. We will have it accessible so people can access it with their Civic Center or outdoor pool membership card. So, yes it will be open during the day. What's nice about it is this did not add much staffing, any staffing to our current pool staff because you don't have to have a lifeguard here. It doesn't have to be monitored for the most part. So far this year the parents did really good as far as keeping their kids in control. We don't have to have maintenance there checking the pool readings because this is all fresh water. So, in regard to operational costs, I think it was the right move with the way we did it because it just didn't add more work to our staff or any additional payroll.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked the water usage, the cost?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said I asked about the bill, and it really hasn't gone up all that much. Now it is up a little bit because this summer that we had, it has been a dry summer for the most part; but our sprinkler system is also running a lot. If I am not mistaken, last year we didn't put our sprinkling systems on until August. This year we had them on since the beginning of June because it got so dry.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said you don't know about the meter.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said your grandkids have been there Dave.

Vice Mayor Grendel said yes, many times.

Chairperson Togliatti said my kids like to use it in the break period because they can't go in the big pool, so they go over there.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said that's what we find is that when the pool closes for the break, that is when they go over there.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I know my wife complimented about the chairs you have there. She wants to find out where you got them so we can order them.

Linda Farace said I have actually gotten several calls about those.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we are going to start replacing the rest of the pool deck, and we are going to go with that style. It's plastic lumber, which we have been turning all of our picnic tables and benches at the park, we have been trying to go plastic lumber. Actually, these are made out of a small Amish shop in Middlefield. So again, it's a local company. We are trying to keep things local. They don't deliver because they said if we deliver, we would have to bring our horses. We have to pick them up, so that's the only negative. People like that.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said moving on.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said you guys mentioned earlier in the year about maybe potentially adding like a retaining vault where you can pump and water flowers and stuff. Have you guys looked into that at all?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we are going to look into the cistern. It would pump wastewater and be able to water the flowers. The wastewater goes through the sanitary sewer, and this is the area we were looking at doing that. We have it set up right now where we could add a cistern there. It would fill up, and then the Service trucks would come and get water. We would refill water from the splash pad and use it.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said it would make sense to do that.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we actually applied for a grant, and I am not sure but I don't think we got that grant.

Our second big project this spring was the bocce ball courts. Again, a combination of some in-house staff doing this. We removed everything. All the concrete work was subbed out to a local bidder, a resident. Another local resident got the work. They did a real nice job. Norm Casini drew up the plans for this. We went off of his plans. What we did, as you can see, the way the courts used to be laid out because the master plan for these courts is to actually put a covering over this. The way the courts went out before, it would take a monster cover to cover those. So, we reconfigured the courts with 2020 standards as far as the width of the courts. The original courts were a little bit too wide. They were 18 feet. Most courts are between 12 and 13 feet. So, we have 12 foot wide courts. We lined them all up so that we are actually banking money this year and next year for a cover for those courts.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked is that going to be 2024 then?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said it's going to be 2023 actually. I don't know if we will do it in the spring of 2023 or do it in the fall. That is what the plan is.

Councilperson DiGeronimo asked is the cover lighted?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we would put lights in there for night games.

Chairperson Togliatti said you can't get rained out.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I know out east and everything, it's quite a big deal.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said in Mayfield Heights they have covered courts.

Community Services Director Thomas said we are talking about adding a tournament to our Home Days.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked a bocce ball tournament?

Community Services Director Thomas said yes.

Vice Mayor Grendel said and pickle ball too.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we had some meetings before we started this with some of the key players, or the key people, and they gave us some suggestions. One of the suggestions was they wanted taller benches. So, we were able to get the benches now so it's easier for the seniors to stand up. So, we made 24 inch high benches, and they are very happy about that.

We did oyster shells for the surface. When you order oyster shells, you can't go to the place and look at them. I am a little disappointed on what we got, but the people are pretty much satisfied with them. Next year we might apply a little bit of a (inaudible) material to it. So, we are going to try to get some (inaudible) from the east coast. It seems to be a little bit of a different product.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said it's nice and accessible. We have sidewalks going into this area where before there was no sidewalk. We have a handicapped court. We also improved the drainage around there also.

There was one other thing that I didn't touch on, the rugs in the Civic Center. They were replaced, and there are less seams now and less tripping hazards and all. The rugs have all been replaced.

Going on to programs, we are basically back to, I put the numbers up of some of the big ones. Overall from 2021 to 2022 has been pretty steady. There are a couple like the Little League dropped for the main Little League. Our tee ball dropped by about 19 people. The Cavs camp went up. Our tennis went through the ceiling, and I will touch base at the end of this. Keep that in mind, last year was 14 and this year was 44. We are going to start pickle ball lessons, and those courts are getting used and used.

Our swimming lessons just went through the ceiling too. People are more comfortable going back to the pool, getting close together with the instructors, so our swimming lessons really went

through the ceiling. Our swim team, we had a big increase in our swim team numbers also this year.

Our ICan Program, Jim Wotowiec who runs the program, last year he was still hesitant on doing a whole lot of stuff, but this year he's getting back gangbusters. There are a lot of new programs, a lot of sports, social events, fundraisers. He does a phenomenal job with that. He gets different organizations involved.

Summer Fitness Club, Linda is the head of this, and she could probably tell you more about this.

Linda Farace said this started last year with an idea that Vern had, and we continued with it this year. It's a seven week summer program. It's two days a week, and it's primarily this year it was run by the Independence High School graduates and college students. So, they did a fantastic job. I myself was there, and Jayme who is the head of my Indy Fit Program, we oversaw the whole thing, but they did a great job. I will let you read the little email there. I got that the weekend following the last day. It's from a parent of two special needs kids because we let anybody and everybody between grades first and twelve enter, and she was just ecstatic. Her kids were happy, so we hope to do more with them.

Here is just some of the stuff that we did. We did all kinds of sports activities, fitness, all kinds of fitness drills, sports drills, and then one of the last things, on one of our last days, we asked the Fire Department to come out and put their new fitness skills to the test, and we put them through a fireman's challenge. They did a pretty darn good job. We had 50 kids signed up.

Chairperson Togliatti said that's great, and was the attendance?

Linda Farace said the attendance was very good. We had a steady 30 every day. This is a program where you don't have to come every day, so a lot of them were involved in other sports and summer camps. If they went on field trips, they would not come that day, they would come the next. So, yes it was attended very well.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said moving on, I just threw in some ICan stuff. If everybody has the opportunity, you can stop by. It is just nice to see the smiling faces. They can't wait to get out of the house and go into society and have fun and do fun things. In this slide and the next slide, they had a nice setup for the Fourth of July and unfortunately, it rained. They like to help out wherever they can and hang out with their peers.

Linda Farace said they had great attendance this year. This program is just phenomenal.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked now do we still hold like a Special Olympics or anything here in town like we used to?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we haven't done that. That was actually Toni Muntean that used to do that. It was always on Memorial Day.

Vice Mayor Grendel said it's been 15 years or so.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said they haven't done it here.

The next thing is events. One of the big events we had this summer, because we have the largest pool facility, not a pool, but pool facility around. We always seem to be hosting this Cuyahoga Valley Swim Championship. I don't know if you were in the park on that Saturday when this was going on, but it's insane.

Councilperson DiGeronimo asked was that two weeks ago?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz replied yes.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said I could hear it.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said there are a lot of people there. They set up tents, and they are everywhere, on the grass and all around the pool. It's a big event. It's a big undertaking. Again, our pool staff did a great job. It just flows, and you have to close the pool every year, and I think they were wrapped up by 2:00 p.m. and the pool opened by 3:00 p.m. It was actually a hot day that day.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said the alleged size of the pool, I noticed that too, I was wondering if our pool was too large, the number of lanes that were there. I was just wondering to do something different in the indoor pool, would you ever lose a lane? If it's utilized, it's utilized, but compared to other places, you might have more lanes.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said most guides today (inaudible) 15-meter pool. The indoor pool is a 25-yard pool which is 6 lanes, and the thing about the indoor pool is you would need 6 lanes though because the high school swim team uses our indoor pool, and that is what most standard pools are a 6 lane minimum. To your point, we do have some really good ideas of going west out that wall and making a nice kids area and a like a therapy pool for the adults.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said without having to sacrifice a lane.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said well no, the pool would stay, but we would add another small therapy pool and a kids area going west out that west area. It would be a nice added amenity to that pool. That's kind of what Brecksville did when they added to their indoor and outdoor. They added an outdoor therapy pool.

The last thing I wanted to say is, we did a lot of brainstorming back in December and January last year and came up with some ideas on how we can try to increase the lifeguard, maintenance people and outdoor maintenance people too because it was just with the conditions we have out there, and we also had to raise our wages. We got our wages up, and that helped a little bit, but again one of the things we have Cee Lusk that works here, and she is constantly recruiting kids, trying to get them to come on board with us and be on our staff. We did a lot more small group training this year, so that helped us out a lot. We were pretty fortunate, our pool hours are basically back to normal. We were able to open all days, seven days a week. Some pools were closed two days a week or three. Avon they were closed on Sundays. There were a couple of

other pools that weren't opened every day because of staffing. We were fortunate we were able to staff it every day of the week. We just tried to encourage and motivate our staff because it seemed like lately, kids used to want to work 40 hours no problem. Now we get kids that come in, and we ask them how many hours would you like to get when we are interviewing them, and they say 15 hours. They just want to work a little bit. A lot of kids don't want to work a lot. They want to work just 15 hours a week or 20 hours a week. That's how it is now. So, we try to help motivate these employees (inaudible). We were able too on some of the holidays, when we were having trouble getting staff, we would try to encourage them, we would buy them donuts or buy them a lunch from Jimmy John's trying to help encourage the staff to come in a work a holiday or a Sunday.

The last slide here, I just want to show you a rendering here, this is actually, the left side is I actually saw it at a marina, and this is what we are going to basically have, and the right side is at Sawmill Creek. This is their pool access. This is what we are going to have on the splash pad which we are hoping our IT Department is working on it. We are going to have where your Civic Center pass or your outdoor pool pass will access that during off hours. We are also going to try to get a keypad. We are going to try to have a combination of the keypad, that is how people enter the Civic Center. They need to bring their pass, swipe it or they can do a keypad. They all have a five digit number. So, that access will be the same for the splash pad.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked what would be the hours of operation?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said the splash pad will work from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. It will be active. If people went at night, the light would be red. If it's green, you could push the button. That's the only way we could save water. If someone wants to push the button, it's on a timer, and it will let a certain amount of time before it shuts off. It won't just run.

This is not on the agenda, but I wanted to bring it up while we are on this. With the tennis and pickle ball courts. Like everything, we have growing pains, and which are good. If you have been by the tennis and pickle ball courts, they are loaded with people. I am dealing with some issues out there, the amount of non-residents getting in. So, if you get any calls from anybody, I am working on this and coming up with a solution. One of the solutions that we are throwing around is possibly locking those courts down and having an access through a card reader like this for your Civic Center pass or outdoor pool pass which would allow the residents in. Then we are also looking at possibly because a lot of the residents want to bring their non-resident friends, which is fine. We are looking at possibly charging a fee for the non-residents, and giving them some kind of a wrist band or tag. It will have a bar code that will allow them like 10 accesses to the courts or whatever we come up with. As I went back to Ordinance 2017-120, we actually do have on the books some fees for the tennis and pickle ball courts. So, this off-season I may be coming to the next Community Services meeting in January with the year wrap up from 2022, and I may come up with something. I just wanted to throw this out there right now. We have some growing pains, and a lot of non-residents are coming in. We don't mind when they come in with a resident, but we are getting people that are coming in, we have people coming in from Shaker Heights, Lyndhurst. They are traveling far because we have some of the best courts around. The reason why I noticed a lot of this too, when I was out doing the bocce court project, I noticed (inaudible). It's kind of crazy.

I am going to look at this and re-evaluate everything, and we will come up with a solution to that.

The last thing I want to bring up is the idea of a dog park. This summer we did have a little incident with someone having their dog loose on Diamond 1, and one of the fences were open, and it ran out and there was a younger girl walking her little dog. The dog went after the little dog, and the girl tried to save the dog, and she was bit in the process. They were both residents too. The Police came and did cite the person who let their dog on the ballfield.

The reason why I am saying this is since this pandemic we have had more and more people with dogs and dogs as pets. We have a lot of residents that just want to run their dog. They don't have a closed in area to run their dog, and you have money allotted for a dog park. I know it was brought up at Public Lands & Buildings meeting back in the spring, and I would like to write specs for a fence and go out to bid. I wanted to see what your take is on this, but I wanted to throw this out there now to get your wheels turning to think about this. I wished we owned some more property in the park, I would love to have it in the park over maybe somewhere off towards that Luvison property, but obviously we don't own that property at this point. The second area would possibly be behind the Kindl buildings off of Stone Road between where the old middle school was and Stone Road. That's the other area that would be a nice size. It is just a matter of basically having a fence, and we would divide it up into a small dog area and a large dog area with gates and that would basically be it. We would make a couple of benches up there. There wouldn't be a whole lot, but I think it would really satisfy a lot of the residents in this town that have dogs. We could keep them off of our fields, and then you could put signs up that would say, or we could lock those field down then they are not used. That's where they would have to go. We could also do the same thing up there. We could put an access reader so we don't have everybody around. From the get-go put in an access reader. You would have to have one of the Civic Center passes or an outdoor pool pass to get access.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked did we talk about that Mayor at one our meetings? I think we talked at length having one there.

Mayor Kurtz said now that we own the property, and we feel that there is a need for a park in the area. There are more people with dogs, and it would give them more control. I think it would be \$25,000 or something for the fence and if we ever wanted to use it, we could take the fence with us. We have the land now, an opportunity to do something. We have parking there.

Chairperson Togliatti said we have always owned that grassy field behind the Kindl property. It was part of the middle school property.

Mayor Kurtz said right. I think part of the problem, we had the previous owner Kindl was concerned, and they didn't want it.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said they brought that to my attention quite a few times when they owned it.

Vice Mayor Grendel said it would make sense because I see people walking their dogs.

Mayor Kurtz said I think Tom is right, have a pass system to control it. We would have the same challenge as with the pickle ball and everything else.

Vice Mayor Grendel said maybe the committee could give Tom some direction.

Chairperson Togliatti asked would it fall under Public Buildings & Lands?

Councilperson Walchanowicz said we talked about it in Public Lands & Buildings, and we were for it then. As having kids that play baseball, and your kids play baseball, I am not an advocate of seeing dogs running around and using it as a place to go to the bathroom. Our kids are out there playing, so I would much rather see it being done elsewhere. I am all for it, especially not even baseball but like in the fall when we are using it for football. You have the kids on their hands and knees.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I am for it.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said for me the key is a QR reader where only our residents can use it. That would definitely have to be there.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said I don't know if there's water there. You need water for a dog park and maybe even a bathroom. Could you build something there? That's the only nice thing about being at the park, there's always a bathroom close by.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said football has gotten so big at the old middle school, and there are port-a-potties there for football.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said there are spigots on the back of those buildings, so we should be able to tie a water line in.

Mayor Kurtz said water would probably be appropriate for dogs.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said that basically concludes everything that I had.

Mayor Kurtz said I guess the question is Chairperson would there be a need for a dog park?

Chairperson Togliatti said it sounds like we have interest.

Mayor Kurtz said we will do that and present it to Council as a whole. Thank you.

Chairperson Togliatti said thank you. Any questions for Tom or Linda? There were none.

Now the moment we have all been waiting for, the senior snowplowing discussion.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Chairperson Togliatti said it's a program where the registration and approvals come through the Community Services Department, but it's really administered through the Service Department. So it's a cross-departmental effort here, and we have had some complaints this last season due to the fact that they just plow one path and oftentimes garages are blocked, stairwells are blocked, sidewalks are blocked. So, I think this is an opportunity for us to brainstorm and see if we can refine and improve and go from there. So, I don't know who wants to start it off.

Community Services Director Thomas said I will start it off. So, there are a couple of things we are going to touch base on, and obviously this being the first snow season, and my first snow season in Independence as well. We had a lot of conversations during the snow season and afterwards internally as well as with the contractors. One of the things that we have identified as a challenge to the service of internal and externally is when people register. Registration opens in October. Last year the deadline was October 30th. On October 30th we had 500 or so people registered. It's a huge number. It's a reliable service. Following the deadline, we had an additional 200 people sign up for that. So, we are kind of laying out routes, and adding routes, adding homes to the routes, and then asking contractors to take on an additional route which may or may not be what they asked for. Out of those 200 after the deadline, there were 51 people who signed up on MLK day. If you remember, it was quite a snowstorm.

One of the things that we wanted to propose to Council is the idea of implementing a late fee as a metric. So, meaning we are going to take on our end a proactive effort to mail all 700 individuals that registered with an application in the mail and remind them that hey this is the deadline. So, that way when Ron's team goes to plan the routes and gives them to contractors, we have a baseline understanding of what we are getting into as opposed to adding an additional 200 during the snow removal season.

Obviously, we are not looking to change the fee, it's \$25, and looking to do that late fee as metric to see if that encourages people to register by the deadline of an additional \$25. So, if you register prior to the deadline, it's \$25, and then using an additional \$25 late fee is just simply a metric to measure to see if that encourages people to meet that registration deadline. That is the first part that we want to propose to the Community Services Committee.

Then I will let Dennis, Ron, Amber chime in with some other things that we made notes in this brochure that would be included in the application, and any other additional comments that you would like to share.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said I just thought right now thinking outside of the box. Instead of calling it a late fee, why don't we call the first fee like an early bird fee of \$25, and then like instead of a late fee, after October 31st.

Community Services Director Thomas said it is something we discussed in the meeting that we had most recently, and it was determined that late fee might be the better language to encourage

people to actually meet that deadline because late has that kind of negative connotation with it, which in this case could be a positive thing as opposed to like the pre-registration. That could certainly be a conversation that we have here as well, but that was the thought process in that.

Amber Veverka said well just another change that we discussed is online registration. So, we have never had online registration before. We always demanded a paper application. We thought that if people could sign up online, provided that they provide us any additional paperwork if necessary by sending that either through the mail or attachment, we should be able to do online registration. Either way, no matter online, or through the office, each application is checked by our Community Resource Manager to make sure that the qualifications are met.

One of the other things that was added, this in general, the brochure itself is new. I looked at probably 10 other communities locally that offer snow removal service, and one of the communities is doing this; and I thought maybe we should do a brochure because they can put this on the frig instead of this long sheet of paper with rules that may or may not get read. If they have this on their frig or easily accessible, they can always review it and have it on their person.

The other thing that we added is a couple of these yellow boxes. So, this is just to remind the person that if they need to leave frequently, or if they need to have home healthcare or some reason why maybe one pass may not be good enough, they are encouraged to sign up for an additional service or service (inaudible) because this is for emergency egress only. So, people who have a home health aide or someone who needs to come every single day, this just kind of states hey review this, make sure this is the program for you.

Then on the back we did add an understanding and disclaimer, and this just basically says that the City has the right to terminate your service if it's not working out on our end. We have had some issues with residents being aggressive towards our contractors or City employees; so basically we just want to make sure that it's a standout thing for them to know, hey this isn't 100%. We have certain parameters, and this is an agreement ultimately.

The only other change, and maybe Ron can speak to this is the 14 hour rule.

Service Director McKinley said yes, it used to be 16 hours to complete the route. They have 14, and in the bid specs we are going to put the contractor is going to be called within 2 hours. Last year I got into a situation where contractors have 16 hours to plow the route, but the (inaudible). So, he would wait for 6, and he would be doing other cities or other parking lots, and he would go last to do it. Residents need service in the first 6 hours. We bid it out at 500, and we set the routes up, they know exactly what they are getting themselves into. There were over 200 more driveways, and the contractors could just not keep up. They didn't go into it knowing that.

Chairperson Togliatti said but we bid this well before October 31st correct?

Service Director McKinley said yes.

Chairperson Togliatti said so what are we basing the bid number on because we aren't going to know?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said we use the numbers from the previous year. So, this year it will be 726 residents that participated, and we have the numbers used for each route. So, Route 1 would be 25 driveways. Route 2 would be the number from last year.

Councilperson Togliatti, your point about lawns and garage doors, we did talk to the contractors who serviced the accounts last year, and we asked them about the possibility of if they would be willing to do any hand shoveling or shoveling and none of them said they were willing to do it. Secondly, they would normally be able to service 12 to 15 drives in an hour, and it would reduce it to 3 or 4 which would be cost prohibitive.

Chairperson Togliatti asked and so historically what have our numbers been? In the high 600s? 700?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said I would say 625 to 650.

Chairperson Togliatti said so the late entrants are kind of expected last year because we were at 500, so we are down 150. So, it was no surprise.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said last year for whatever reason, it was exceptional. I think another thing that happened was that people wait for that first snowstorm. It's like well if we don't get the first snowstorm until the middle of January, they are rolling the dice. What has happened every year we had the program, less and less contractors are willing to participate. We met with them two weeks ago in Service; and they all said that this year they anticipate costs going up 30% to 40% just because of the cost of fuel and everything. We have had a couple of contractors that have already said that they are not going to participate in the program this year for various reasons. One guy just wants to get out of it. I think another guy just feels he can do better just contracting homes on his own.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said and they are all getting screamed at by the residents.

Councilperson DiGeronimo asked so we will have participation?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said I think we will have enough contractors to service the program. I think that the cost would be substantially higher than last year. We won't know until it's bid. There's one contractor in particular, he has the capabilities of doing the complete City, but he is the most expensive. Typically, he gets a limited number of routes, but this year he will probably pick up what we can't assign to anybody else.

Community Services Director Thomas said, and I think the changes that we were proposing, both on the service end and signing people up, at the end of the day we are not trying revamp the entire program, but we are trying to make the service better by making some slight changes as opposed to coming to Council and saying hey we want to make snow removal \$25,000 like Dennis said. So, by proposing these changes, we are hopeful that getting another year under our belts, these small changes will positively impact the service that we are providing to the residents.

Chairperson Togliatti said and I think the brochure is a great idea because it clearly explains the expectations. It is all laid out in black and white, and not too many people can argue about it.

Community Service Director Thomas said the application is (inaudible) application, but once you had to turn that into us, if they chose that paper copy; but to Amber's point, something separate that they don't have to return, they can hang it on their frig. We have not been so proactive in the past. When we say we are going to print and mail 700 applications, people don't have to come to the Civic Center to get it. They can go online if they want to get it. We don't know how many people will use the online registration given that we are working through the generation that is not more tech savvy, but we literally put it in their hand and they can email it back to us. Hoping that by being proactive, this late fee that we are talking about, would be a moot point. That is the goal that all 700 people sign up by the deadline that nobody has to incur an additional cost.

Vice Mayor Grendel said and you will have it online for the first time, a lot of people don't have to come in.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked so what is the age it starts off at?

Community Services Director Thomas said 60, and that is the age for the seniors. That is considered a senior across all the programs.

Councilperson DiGeronimo asked you don't know the bracket of people between 60 and 70? Do you think we have that many 60 year-olds.

Amber Veverka said yes, it's almost like a right of passage when they turn 60, and then they get snow removal.

Community Services Director Thomas said we don't have that breakdown, but it's something we can run off and tell you.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I have had residents tell me that I pay \$25 for my snow removal, and they should be shoveling my driveway. My whole driveway should be clear. It's amazing. Everybody at this point is just taking advantage of this in some way, in some shape, in some form. Whether or not in the spring we are going back and fixing lawns.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said I don't know taking advantage, it's the program.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said from what my understanding is of the program, it was supposed to be one swipe so an ambulance can get in and out of the driveway or a safety vehicle, and people expect their whole driveway done.

Service Director McKinley said I send Service guys to shovel.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said right, and that's BS in my book. They are paying \$25 for the whole season. Every one of them is taking advantage of it. I don't know when the last time the ordinance was looked at or amended or rewritten.

Community Services Director Thomas said it was 2016 or 2019.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said to me as a guy who snowplows in the wintertime, I think there needs to be a lot of changes to that.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said you are speaking on the cost.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said oh yeah, but I know we tend to not charge residents a lot of money, but we are paying out a lot of money every year to snowplow driveways. Think about it.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said we subsidize the program very heavily.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said so my thing is we subsidize it very heavily, and I am just going to throw a number out there. We are paying a contractor say \$17 to go and do a driveway; and then Ron is sending a guy out who is making \$30 an hour to go redo a driveway. What is the point? What are we doing?

Community Service Director Thomas said the last time it was changed was back in 2014.

Service Director McKinley said and Chris to your point, that happens. In the beginning they go out 4 inches, and now we have 10 inches, and by the end it's 16 inches. They ought to go out once each snowfall.

Councilperson DiGeronimo asked how do you dispatch these contractors? Is it per day?

Service Director McKinley said I err on the side of caution. We see 3 inches, and it keeps coming, we are calling them out (inaudible).

Councilperson DiGeronimo said you are basically saying that day, and if it continues to snow we will send you out tomorrow.

Service Director McKinley said well, they have 16 hours when I call. They have to do it in 16, but they have to sleep for a little bit, and then I call them back out.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said but like that MLK snow, I probably had the snowblower out there three times. You can't keep up. You just struggle everywhere.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said Councilperson DiGeronimo, the program in Brecksville has between 70 to 80 residents that are in the Brecksville senior program.

Chairperson Togliatti asked and is that just based on HEAP? Or what is the criteria of entry for their program?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said you know I think it is based on financial need, and I think there is probably some disability allowances there.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked what do they charge, the same?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said you know I'm not sure what it is.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said I don't want to say the age of who is in it, but we probably have a greater population that's eligible for this program. We have more people living more into 90 now, and being able to live on their own. So, our population that could be eligible.

Chairperson Togliatti asked and do we have any numbers on our HEAP participants?

Community Services Director Thomas said it's minimal. It's very low. I could pull that. I would be shocked if it was over 10.

Chairperson Togliatti said so if we were to go to Brecksville's standards, we would really not have a program. It would be something we could handle in-house then.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Chairperson Togliatti said and aside from cost, Chris are there any other changes from your perspective as a snowplow individual?

Councilperson Walchanowicz said like this past winter, there were times when I was doing one driveway three or four times on MLK or the other day it snowed a lot.

Service Director McKinley asked how many driveways do you do?

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I do six lots, commercial lots and like 12 driveways.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said one of the other challenges is also that like on Hillside for example, there are some very short driveways, but there are some driveways that are extremely long. When the contractor bids on it, he's bidding on that plow area, and it was brought up in the meeting that they wish there was some way that they could separate some of these really challenging driveways out of the program, but we didn't really have a way to address that.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I know for years it was \$1, the program was \$1, and then it gradually got up there. For the amount of work that the Service Department has to do to follow up on some of these contractors, the \$25 just doesn't seem feasible anymore with gas prices the way they are, how much equipment costs, trucks, plows, stuff like that. I know we don't like adding to what we charge for the residents to do things, but it could cost the City double this winter to plow driveways compared to last year just the way the gas prices are. I guess it's when do we say when.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said last year for the program we spent \$75,000.

Vice Mayor Grendel said it was higher than the last few years before that.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said the previous year was \$70,000, but the first snow came late in the year.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said think about it, we spent \$75,000 and the City took in \$17,500. That is not taking in the money spent for our Service employees going back and making the resident happy because the drivers are doing what they are told.

Service Director McKinley said the contractors they were plowing per the specs.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said our residents just aren't happy with that spec.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said we got complaints. I would go out and look at the driveway. Take pictures and that, and I don't think I ever ran across a driveway that the contractor didn't do what he was supposed to do. There was one drive in particular where they said the contractor only plowed half of my driveway, and I could see where they pulled a car that was parked in front, drove it through the snowbank.

Service Director McKinley said they would say they didn't plow my horseshoe and stuff like that.

Chairperson Togliatti said and well in this it's clearly spelled out the primary access drive only. So, I think this brochure answers a lot of those questions, and hopefully will cut some of those phone calls and complaints before they pick up the phone, if they read it.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked how do we give Service the ability to say no they do what you paid for. How do we do that?

Chairperson Togliatti said well I mean that is administrative.

Service Director McKinley said we are going to go help them.

Mayor Kurtz said we get a call, and what are you going to tell them no? They complain about the driveway. They complain about the sidewalk.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said they want us to come back out and do their whole driveway.

Chairperson Togliatti asked and do we hold the contractors responsible for lawn damage? Or do we as the City go back and repair that?

Service Director McKinley said well if we can prove it, if they have a Ring camera, and it shows us, then yes. If they don't have actual proof, or the mailbox is damaged.

Councilperson DiGeronimo asked what other tweaks on here are new compared to last year?

Amber Veverka said the late fee, the online registration, the disclaimer, the middle and the 14 hours and the disclaimer on the back. Everything else is the same as last year.

Councilperson DiGeronimo asked the bullet point with the rental property, what does that accomplish?

Amber Veverka said so if someone is renting, the homeowner has to sign off that the plow is allowed to enter their driveway.

Councilperson DiGeronimo asked that's just a liability issue?

Amber Veverka said I'm not sure, it was something that the Law Department wanted on there.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said this is a fantastic program, and I love to talk to people at work that don't know Independence, and I explain that if you move to Independence, and I tell them what they do; and their jaws drop because they can't believe how generous this program is. If it gets to a point that it's unmanageable, either because of the number of homes, or if one person calls, but with 700 people in it, that population grows and there are a number of issues, I would say it's a great program, but if we can't do it well, we are getting too many complaints, then that's going to change as needed. Then shrinking that population either by adjusting the financial or the age limits, I would think about that. I would say I don't know how this compares to any other service that we offer; so if this is out of whack compared to a cost-sharing, then I think it's worth adjusting. If many of our programs are 50-50 or 70-30, and any program sticks out, I think it's worth adjusting now. If it's worth adjusting the price, we can do it, but I don't know if I would pick out one program without knowing all the others.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked so is it fair to say we charge depending on like an age group. So, if you were 80 to 95, you pay \$25. If you are 75 to 80, you pay a little bit more. If you are 60 to 70, and you are still working, you could pay for a contractor on your own, maybe that's different cost. Maybe that would alleviate the amount of people who we have signing up for the program.

Did we have to replace any mailboxes due to contractors knocking mailboxes down last year? Do you know of?

Service Director McKinley said sure.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said so now there's something else we add on to it, the cost of mailboxes.

Service Director McKinley said if we can prove it, then we go to them.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said just throwing ideas out there.

Mayor Kurtz asked what price Chris would you throw out there?

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I think it depends on what our bids are. My neighbor is a landscaper. He went up \$20 a cut because of how much gas is costing now to run his mowers every day. So, I am paying \$6.00 a gallon for diesel fuel for my truck, so I can imagine what these guys are plowing, they are going through tankful after tankful a day. It's \$250 to fill my truck.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said they said typically if they were just bidding it as an individual service, it would be \$40 a driveway.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said per push. That's where it was last winter.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said and some of these contractors are coming in between \$17 and \$18. I think the highest we have gotten is \$21 a drive.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said even if we charge market rate, this is a fantastic deal. It's great to let somebody handle the purchasing for you, and give the people purchasing power and get some reliability because they are not going to not show up. Even if we just did that, it would still be a great value.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said Seven Hills, they will vet drivers and make recommendations to residents. Then Seven Hills is not involved with the collection of the money. The vendors bill the residents themselves.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said the resident can call that contractor direct. I am sure that Marie after any snowstorm, that 8 hours is spent on the phone.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said so like last winter, and most people know Carl Zoloty, and he had an app on his phone for snowplowing, and you just check the app periodically and see who is looking for snowplowers. You can sign up for this app, and this is where I live, and I need my driveway plowed. So, like those big snows, the going rate in Garfield, Maple Heights was \$125 per push because people couldn't get out of their driveways. People were willing to pay so they could get out of their driveways.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said Carl was part of our program. I think one of the things right now though is we are up against a timeline, and I don't think we can make any major tweaks; but I think Emily had suggested the last time we met that she would like to start talking about the program in 2023-2024 probably in January.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked when does the bidding process go out?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said we didn't put it out for bid yet, it's going to go out to be bid and advertised next week. It takes 22 days for the program, and we hope to have it on for legislation in September.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said so we should know in the next month where are bids are at.

Chairperson Togliatti said and we will bid with the anticipation of 700 residents give or take.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said correct.

Community Services Director Thomas said we do have the flexibility to wait until the bids come in if you want to adjust the price this year.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Community Services Director Thomas said we could just wait because nothing else that we are talking about changes the bid specs or changes information really for our residents. It's just the price point we have to put on the application.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked am I the only one that's open about charging a little bit more?

Chairperson Togliatti said I mean it's an incredible value for what it is. Every single one of our City services are subsidized, some more heavily than others. If you are going to up the price \$10, it's going to bring in an extra \$7,000. You are going to most likely upset a lot of residents and bring in a little bit of revenue for the City. It's a debate for Council. I am sure everyone has a different viewpoint and different perspective on it.

I think that the changes that are laid out in this brochure are acceptable to me.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said the big thing that as I listen to all of this is trying to get that number down from 700 to even 600. What about starting to gradually raise the age up, like it's 60 and maybe make it to 62; and if you were on it last year for those couple of people, then grandfather in. What about raising it to 62 or just gradually, and then once you get to 65, maybe it will cut, even if it's 100, that's 100 people that will be off the program.

Community Services Director Thomas said I can easily run a report that would show the age of the people on there.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I would like to see what our ages are.

Community Services Director Thomas said I could get that to you tomorrow.

Mayor Kurtz said it's something we should look at. Maybe quantify that, and maybe do it gradually, and grandfather, that could be a strategy.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said it would be interesting to see the history, like 10 years ago what were the numbers?

Community Services Director Thomas said we might be able to in our history, we could go back.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said people are working longer now. People used to be retiring at 60 or 62, and now people are working to 65, 70. People bring in a lot of money. Most 60 year-olds are still working, and probably making some good money.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said as long as the program is such a big savings, you are going to have, and there are probably people that sign up for it knowing it isn't the best service, but just by chance, it helps them out that particular day, what's \$25? What do they have to lose?

Chairperson Togliatti said and there have been years when we had to just call them out twice. One year we didn't have to call them, and we credited them for the next year. It's a roll of the dice.

Vice Mayor Grendel said City services back in the 1970s when we were having those bad storms. Some years it would start snowing in November, and it wouldn't stop until March or April.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said since we are talking about snowplowing, and should be in Streets & Sidewalks, but there were a lot of complaints about sidewalks. There was discussion about the potential of a bombardier for this coming snow so we can alleviate some of the complaints with Service and Community Services.

Service Director McKinley said we still have the two whackers. I have found a cheaper bombardier by \$20,000, and the used ones are from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, there is nothing used that is 1980s or 1990s. The two that we have are 35 and 25 years old, and they are a \$180,000. I think eventually we are going to have to have one as a backup.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said and especially since we are putting in more sidewalks.

Service Director McKinley said we have 7 miles of sidewalks now. The City is growing. There are a lot more sidewalks. We have those two Whackers.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said that's one thing to think about too, it's a high-priced item, but it can last 40 years.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said unfortunately it can only be used for sidewalk snowplowing. It's a specialty machine, but we didn't have the complaints that we did when we had them and they were running.

Service Director McKinley said in two inches of snow the Whackers are fine. If you have six inches or more, you can't move it.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said well like you said earlier, the rarity in snowstorms like that, this coming winter we may not have any snowstorms like that.

Mayor Kurtz said chains for the Whackers.

Service Director McKinley replied no.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said the National Weather Service are saying that there 15 snow events, two inches or more, in the average Cleveland weather.

Service Director McKinley said I thought about chains on the Whackers, but I was afraid of damaging all the sidewalks around the City.

Mayor Kurtz said most of the snowplows have (inaudible).

Service Director McKinley said you go over someone's driveway with chains on, and now we are fixing a driveway.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Community Services Director Thomas asked so what's in terms of next steps so we are all speaking the same language? The committee is good with the changes I proposed?

Councilperson Walchanowicz said yes.

Community Services Director Thomas asked do we want to withhold the late fee concept until we see what our bid specs are pricing, or do we go late fee regardless? Right now we are proposing a \$25 late fee as a metric, which would double the cost. If you like fee idea and want to wait on the price of that, we could determine what the price of the snow removal fee based on the registration this year and the age bracket.

Vice Mayor Grendel said there's going to be a late fee.

Mayor Kurtz said we can always be flexible. There are circumstances. Incentivize people to give us a more accurate count so we are not having to run like a chicken with its head cut off trying to service an additional 200 people that never signed up that could have easily signed up.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think in our City newsletter, the website, maybe putting a late fee so that this way they know.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked so will that go out in September's Spotlight?

Amber Veverka said the information for this about hey this is starting is going into the September/October Spotlight, and then in addition it will be on the website. We will also mail to everybody who was on our list last year. Then we do also have on the Transportation Programs anybody we drive or who gets Meals on Wheels delivered, has to have a snow service, whether it be through us or a private contractor. So, Jen is geared up to follow up with all of those people who need someone to get into their driveway.

Community Services Director Thomas said but registration would not open until we determine if the price will go up. So, the information is out there, but to have people register, we need to have a price.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said so 2014 was the last time the price went up if I am understanding correctly.

Community Services Director Thomas said I asked Debi for the ordinance previously.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said eight years ago. People have to understand that.

Amber Veverka said and I can check, but I don't believe in the September/October Spotlight, I believe I left off the price. I just said hey sign up is October 3rd to October 31st, stay tuned basically. I don't believe we put the price in the article, but we can double check tomorrow.

Vice Mayor Grendel said now is the time because everybody understands everything is more expensive with inflation. Everything is going up.

Chairperson Togliatti asked from the committee here, is there a recommendation to Council that we increase the rate of this program? Or should we wait until the bids come in to make a decision on that? Do we want to maintain the level that we are at?

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked when would you want to put the pricing in on that for the residents, by when?

Community Services Director Thomas said I think sign up starts October 3rd. I would say we would want to know in September so that we have time to print all the applications and get them out to people hands.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said so we may not even have the bids by.

Vice Mayor Grendel said you know they are going to be more.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said it's going to be way more, right.

Amber Veverka said the Spotlight is expected to hit mid-August, the September/October Spotlight, so you can be sure that they are going to be calling us and asking for brochures, not that we have to have them available. We have had it available earlier in other years.

Community Services Director Thomas said we could be flexible on our end. We will just have all hands on deck. If it's the week before, we will just be ready to print and get out the applications.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said we have been talking to contractors about 40%.

Chairperson Togliatti asked and what was the average per push?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said the average per push, I think it was just under \$16.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said so you have to figure it's going to be somewhere between \$18 and \$22 a push.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said \$15.75 is the average cost last year. If it goes up 40%, you are talking a \$6.00 increase. We called the drivers out last year I think seven times.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said for me I don't see, I know we went from \$1 to \$25. I don't see going \$50 for an entire winter is a lot of money. You could get your driveway plowed 20 times, and it's still \$50.

Chairperson Togliatti said yeah but they are going to view it as a 100% increase.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I'm just saying.

Chairperson Togliatti said you do 40% increase as the drivers are doing, and we pass that, it would be another \$10 to \$35, and bring in \$7,000. Then it gets back to the discussion of how we subsidize all of our other programs and how this compares. This is really a help in emergency service.

I am pretty comfortable with the \$25 rate, if you want to do the late fee or the early bird, whatever you want to call it. I am good with that.

Community Services Director Thomas said and the goal again is for us to be proactive so that people don't have to pay a late fee.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said I'm good with the late fee. I think it should go up, but if you don't adjust it \$1, it may be nothing to move it \$10 from the City's standpoint; but at some point

you want to get it up to \$50. Incrementally every five years going up \$5 or something like that. Otherwise, we would never touch it. I think that adjusting the age would have a bigger impact as far as due to our population, and is it manageable where we are.

Community Services Director Thomas said and I can have that information for that group tomorrow.

Mayor Kurtz asked if we change the ordinance would we change the age?

Community Services Director Thomas said I believe so.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked are you okay with it going up a little bit?

Chairperson Togliatti said okay, sure.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said we have to start someplace.

Chairperson Togliatti said it's a wonderful service.

Mayor Kurtz said they will expect more.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said Mayor when you increased the lunches, there was a substantial increase from \$3.00 to \$5.00, but yet I think that there were some complaints, but overall I don't think it was really unreasonable.

Mayor Kurtz said minimal because people saw the value.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I think most people see the value for this, it's just those few that don't; but for you and I it's only going to cost me \$30 to have my driveway plowed all winter long. What's an extra \$5?

Mayor Kurtz said I would encourage Council, whatever you raise it to, \$5, \$10, the age or whatever, that everybody should be on the side of Council so it doesn't become political. It just becomes a real issue because we are stable right now. Who knows what's going to happen financially. I think we need to be realistic, either by age or by value. It's a great program. It's a great service. I don't think people expect it, even though we plowed 7 times in year. I don't want to get into something that's complicated. I think if we do it incrementally over time, people aren't going to complain. It's a great program.

They all understand. They go and fill up their car with gas. They see what it's costing. It's a process we have to go through. They will say if they pay more, they will expect better service, but we went through that since it was \$1.

Chairperson Togliatti said it will be interesting to see the demographic of this.

Community Services Director Thomas said I will have that all to you tomorrow. I will check on the number of HEAP applicants as well.

Mayor Kurtz said so we will bid it out, we will get the information. Obviously, we will change the ordinance because we have to anyways.

Chairperson Togliatti said Council will have to act on it as a whole.

Mayor Kurtz said as soon as we can get that stuff together, we can bid it. Then we will know what it's going to cost us.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked will we have this for September?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said for the September meeting.

Mayor Kurtz said as soon as we bid the information, we will have a meeting, and see if we are going to need Council to buy into something. We will put it together as a group, and explain it with the cost of gas, insurance and everything else. Dennis, you have your marching orders. I appreciate Council's input.

Chairperson Togliatti asked anything else?

Councilperson DiGeronimo said just real quick. The senior trash pickup, you do it with a piece of equipment. To me that is a service that we could provide for a fee that could be possible. I am thinking of people with long driveways on a hill. I have seen people take their garbage cans. These people will pay for a service. If we have the capacity, it could offset some cost. I just wanted to throw that out there.

Service Director McKinley said so when I started, we had about 57 to 62 senior drives. Now that they are seeing the rubbish truck, we are up to 102. So, if we advertise, I won't be able to keep up with the program. So, that's something to consider.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said I think it would pay for itself. Think about on Sprague, on Hillside.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said they stink, they really do.

Chairperson Togliatti asked for a motion to adjourn.

Moved by DiGeronimo, seconded by Walchanowicz, to adjourn the Community Services Committee Meeting of August 11, 2022. Voice Vote: 3 yes/0 no; motion carried.

There being no further business to discuss, the Community Services Committee Meeting was adjourned at 5:59 p.m.

Debra J. Beal, Clerk of Council
Minutes Unapproved at Time of Release 08/12/22
