

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE  
PUBLIC LANDS & BUILDINGS COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 1, 2020 2:00 P.M.  
VIA ZOOM**

Present: Chairman Chris Walchanowicz  
Councilperson Tom Narduzzi  
Councilperson James Trakas

Also Present: Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz  
Vice Mayor Dave Grendel (arrived at 2:43 p.m.)  
Councilperson Kenn Synek  
Councilperson Dale Veverka  
Law Director Gregory J. O'Brien  
Economic Development Director Jessica Hyser  
Procurement Coordinator Dennis Zdolshek  
City Engineer Don Ramm (arrived at 2:30 p.m.)  
Service Director Leon Karas

Chairman Chris Walchanowicz called the meeting to order at 2:06 p.m.

Chairman Walchanowicz said we are going to flip-flop the two agenda items. We are going to start off with the Kin properties and then go to the GPD group second. So with that, Jess do you want to begin.

Chairman Walchanowicz said I did get a call today from Dale Kindl. He said if there's anything we need, or if there are any questions that we don't have answers for, we can feel free to call him at any time.

Economic Development Director Hyser said fantastic.

So, the properties that we are talking about here are the 6595 and then 6571 through 6573 Brecksville Road properties. Those buildings are the buildings that you see pictured. There are two buildings actually set up on two separate parcels. We will see that when we look at the aerial shot. So, these two parcels are a little bit more than one acre of land at the corner of Stone and Brecksville Roads.

Just to kind of give this some context, we thought it might be helpful to kind of share with you how this fits into the larger play of the downtown Independence. So, this property, like I mentioned, a little bit over an acre. The City already owns about 17 ½ acres around that property on both the east and west side of Brecksville Road, largely consisting of the old middle school property; and then the neighbors to the north on the other side are the Carnegie Companies, and

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they have approximately 5 ½ acres. If you look on the west side of the road, St. Michael's church is the other large landowner with again about another 5 ½ acres of land.

So, to give you some context though, the City has been acquiring this property particularly the stuff that is on the west side of the road for a number of years. The first acquisition though was this water tower property which was acquired in about 1975; and then in 1990 started acquiring some of the properties that are here on the west side of the road.

To kind of go over a little bit of the history of the site, it was really undeveloped until about the early 1930's at which time a residential house was built on the property. Many people remember some of the commercial development which happened in the 1950's which was the Independence Family Practice, that facility was the first building that was built and then gas station which was a former Sunoco gas station was at the corner of Stone and 21. That was built in the 1950's, and it existed until about 1988. Then in 1991 the building where Scratch is was built in about 1991.

So, this is just a conceptual plan of something that was done in 2013. It was kind of a conceptual redevelopment of the historic downtown. You will see that this corner has a new structure on it as well as the rest of downtown, see the existing building that is owned by Carnegie kind of in the background along with the west side of the road. It's just kind of a conceptual plan of let's redo the downtown and how this might look in the future.

I want to talk about why we are actually acquiring this property. This is a key corner to the City's downtown district. I don't think if you look at that rendering you would argue anything but that. You have one piece of land that one acre that is really a key cornerstone to that entire development of the east side of the road. As I mentioned before, the City has a long history of property acquisition in the downtown area.

In 2013 we did an economic strategic plan, and part of that plan was looking at redeveloping the downtown area, and the plan really focused on the downtown redevelopment. There was a lot of support from the community for developing a vibrant downtown.

This property I think is key to transformational redevelopment of our downtown. While it's only one acre, not having control of that property really limits what we can do for the entire frontage, the front side of the road. The property is currently underutilized. The tenants in there are not as strong as we have seen over the years. Obviously, with a medical office, I remember in the heyday the Independence Pharmacy was in there. So, it was a bit of a different character.

There is a limited number of large property owners in downtown. We the City being one of them have the opportunity to control a large chunk of land and really be able to set the tone for redevelopment of our downtown.

This also would give us the opportunity to determine the ingress and egress of future development behind the site; and this is also key for us being able to talk with other potential developers to help make this downtown development come to fruition. So, I know we are only talking about one acre of land, but it really is key to the downtown redevelopment.

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So, let's talk about value. In 2014 the City did conduct an appraisal of the property, and in 2014 it was appraised for about \$1,250,000. Earlier this year we did conduct another appraisal which appraised the property at \$950,000. The appraisal attributed the change in value to the lease strength of the current tenants. The commercial property though is listed on CoStar which is a national commercial real estate website as a property for sale; and the asking price is almost \$1,600,000.

To kind of go back in the history, and maybe the Mayor could share a little bit more about this. In 2014 the City attempted to buy the property kind of under a similar term but a higher purchase price of about \$1,400,000; and for whatever reason that deal kind of fell through. Mayor, could you add a little bit of history to that for us?

Mayor Kurtz said the issue at the time, we had a completed deal in terms of passed legislation. When we drilled down, we determined that the environmental conditions were not appropriate at the time, and so we withdrew our conditional offer and subsequent to that the owners went and did further remediation which puts us in a different position today.

Economic Development Director Hyser said and I think that goes then to the next slide which is some of those environmental concerns. So, the Bureau of Underground Storage Tanks Regulations, BUSTR, has provided a letter stating that the site has been cleaned up and no further action is required from them from the underground storage tanks. We do know that there is some asbestos in the building, but looking at that right now; any building being taken down likely had an asbestos issue.

Chief, do you have anything to add to some of these environmental concerns through some of the findings you uncovered?

Fire Chief Rega said no, not really. I think Taft Law had a paper that they produced in March of this year that outlined three concerns, and one was the BUSTR ruling, basically questioning what rules they were using to provide that clearance. We did come up with some information from their guidebook or their handbook that showed that they did do it correctly. So, one issue with BUSTR was resolved. There were some outstanding concerns about vapors in the building, but they date back from a report from 2016; and the BUSTR clearance letter was December 11, 2018. So, that was almost three years later, and my thought that whatever remediation they did probably resolved that issue; but we are in the process of trying to determine that. We are just trying to drill down and get more information from BUSTR on what documents they had to provide that clearance to clarify things. So, that's the extent of it.

Economic Development Director Hyser said the question of course remains about what we do with the current tenants that are in the structures. We would keep them under their current lease. Obviously most of them have one, two or three year leases. It's going to take us some time to develop the plans of what the redevelopment of the site might look like. So, our goal would be to keep them under their current facilities, work on those plans and then hopefully these tenants could be new tenants into the new space so that it would be seamless for them.

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So, our plan for the future development would be, obviously we entered into the contract with Dimit Architects at our last Council meeting. They are in the process of beginning that master planning work, so we would continue that work. We would also begin identifying brokers and developer partners that could help bring this to fruition. So, we have had some meetings with some folks that are interested in development of that site in terms of the middle school and consolidated Kindl property site. We would continue to have those discussions, and then we are also looking how this development would fit into some future housing development on the rear further east portion of this property. We have had the discussions over the years about maintenance free living, fee simple lots; that development would be key obviously to helping support whatever would be developed up front, if it was some sort of retail, restaurant, even office space that would provide housing options for folks in our community that are looking for those options, the maintenance free living.

So, kind of the take away from our discussion today I would say this is a rare opportunity, not all the time do we come up with the opportunity to acquire a key piece in our downtown. This is a key opportunity for us to make transformational changes in our downtown area. Rarely over time has the opportunity come up when we have purchased a property. This has been six years ago that we first attempted to purchase the property, the price was obviously higher in 2014 than it is today; so that's a rare opportunity when the cost of land acquisition goes down. So, waiting longer probably won't allow the property to go much lower, and we would miss an opportunity.

The major environmental concerns we believe have been addressed. The BUSTR letter that we received kind of relieved some of those initial concerns that I think were present during the 2014 acquisition. Again, we have talked about people who are interested in redeveloping sites. We are looking at things right now with this 2020 lens of Covid. The way we act right now is to position us for the future. So, while we are in the Covid crisis, and none of us know what's going to happen in the future; the decisions we are making today will put us in a position where we have the opportunity to meet what happens in the future. So, we are putting ourselves in the position where we are in a position to be prepared, have the opportunities when the Covid crisis is finally over. I don't want us to overlook that opportunity right now.

So, that's what we kind of brought up today to discuss with all of you, and I am sure you guys have lots of questions.

Chairman Walchanowicz said at this point if anybody has questions let's put them out on the table so we get some answers that we are all waiting for.

Councilperson Trakas asked Jessica how much money is derived annually from the rents and as a corollary to that, how much is the City and school district getting through property taxes on both properties?

Economic Development Director Hyser said I will have to get that answer for you. Sorry, I don't have those documents in front of me. I can look up the information from the fiscal office.

Councilperson Trakas said while you are doing that Jessica, can you also take a look at, I know these may not be apples-to-apples comparisons, but can you see what the value of the property

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around the square is there? For example, what did we pay for some of the other properties that we owned; but what else, like Sutula's mall, what is that valued at? Just to see the comparisons of what we are looking at to make sure that we are getting the best value for the buck. So, it's less than it was in 2014, but it's also we are willing to pay more for than it's worth; and so I would just like to see why that's the case. Of course, you said that the property is valued the way it was because of the rents; well we are not going to be using the rents necessarily so that's why all those questions are being asked.

Economic Development Director Hyser said sure. I understand that. I will say that establishing the value of the Carnegie plaza, and that's what you are referring to, is a little bit more challenging because they are all in individual parcels; but I will pull that information out for you.

Councilperson Trakas said thank you.

Economic Development Director Hyser said let me see if the tax information is broken down here.

Mayor Kurtz said while you are working on the tax information, keep in mind that, and I am sure Council is aware that this is property that we are putting together to try to do two things, re-energize the downtown area in a fashion and form that would benefit the residents, but know there's not a lot of tangential benefits to the residents of the downtown area the way it's evolved. The goal is to take both sides of the street and create an environment that becomes not only a place to live but a destination for the residents to enjoy, and re-establish a sense of community.

So, those are the influencing factors that we are trying to achieve through this parcel. It further commits us to that process.

Chairman Walchanowicz said I agree. Is there anybody else who has questions because I know from last month's Council meeting there were quite a few Councilpersons who wanted questions answered.

Councilperson Narduzzi said just to touch on Councilperson Trakas' question, keeping the schools whole Jim or what the City brings in with taxes; it's going to be a temporary loss. I mean hopefully we will double that if someone builds a nicer structure that houses different components that are worth more value to the school district and the City. So, whatever the school loses, and I guess maybe the City could even talk about keeping them whole, that would keep our hands in the fire and move this along a little quicker. I think the end result the school will be much better off.

Economic Development Director Hyser said right now there's no impact to the schools. This transfer is still going to be a taxable property, even though the City does own it because there is revenue generated on that property.

Councilperson Trakas said Mayor, just out of curiosity would you be open to having subsequent legislation, not tied to this, but to talk about the development plan and putting a timeline to that

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plan so that we are not sitting and holding on this property for long periods of time. It's a rather large expenditure, but I think, go ahead.

Mayor Kurtz said that's a concern you have raised in the past respectfully, and I believe we have had a history of buying properties to clean things up; but then we didn't create any additional remedy by investing such as Kuhn's across the street. We accomplished our partial goal which was to clean the things up, but this would allow us to, and it's going to take several years to get some real traction on the (inaudible). I believe the housing component to keep our residents in our City is one of the major forces driving this thing from my perspective, and the collective will of the people wanting a place to meet a sense of community, that's another factor I think that drives my thinking in terms of what the people expect. To answer your question, as time plays out, in a couple of years we should have shovels in the ground and a tax generator and a repurposing; but if Council wants to do something and put a stake in the ground in terms of a timetable, I could support that if the majority of Council thinks that is appropriate.

Chairman Walchanowicz said I think that's a good idea. I think it would show faith to the residents as well that we just didn't buy a piece of property to buy a piece of property. We have a timeline on it; then it will kind of show faith for the residents.

Mayor Kurtz said if I may, if we don't do it, then we should be forced to put a For Sale on the property or whatever we are going to do if we are not going to utilize it; but I am confident that this Council is motivated to raise the bar and take this to the next level, this downtown redevelopment.

Chairman Walchanowicz said for how many years now we have been dealing with residents wanting to know what we are going to do, when we are going to do, and it's just always the same story; and it's time to kind of, we have to plant the shovel like you said Mayor, and we have tighten it up and get rolling.

Economic Development Director Hyser said I think the Covid issue, as we emerge from it, this property will be ready to go for redevelopment.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked is there anything else? Councilperson Veverka do you have any questions?

Councilperson Veverka said I just have a comment. I know that the Mayor referenced the property across the street, the Kuhn property, and I know that the target was to clean it up, but hopefully do something, not only the Kuhn property but also Johnny Tesmer's barbershop. It was purchased at that time for a total of \$195,000, somewhere around a third of a million dollars; and that being 25, 26, 27 years ago. That property has basically sat there, and there were people there who were employees who lost out on income taxes, lost out on property taxes because there was no income generated from the parking lot. So, I am just a bit apprehensive that we might end up in that situation; so if it ends up being purchased, I think that Mr. Trakas' idea of putting some kind of time limit because that quarter of a century that went by, that was a huge amount of money that ended up not coming back to the City by not developing that property.

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Chairman Walchanowicz said well we agree with that. The biggest thing with the Kin properties, they are rented. We will be getting some income from those properties; so we are not taking, obviously it's a lot of money to put out. Hopefully we are going to be getting some money in off of them; but in the long run at some point when we sell to a developer, we are going to recoup our monies. Until then, we will have rent coming in, and like Councilperson Trakas said, we can put a timetable on this.

Councilperson Veverka said unfortunately we don't have a good history of moving forward with good things after we make land purchases. I think about the property on the 30 some acres off of Rockside that were purchased, but we haven't been able to get traction with that. With that factor going on, combined with the problem that we have with the pandemic, not really having a good handle on the amount of income we will be getting from income tax, the possibility related to reduced property tax because of the lower occupancy rate in the Rockside area, it just makes me kind of apprehensive to spend nearly a million dollars on a piece of property at this juncture.

Chairman Walchanowicz said it's fair, it is understandable.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I view it as a temporary setback for a permanent improvement. So, if you take a step back today, you buy this property at a lot less money, it helps us in the future to develop it into something bigger. If we don't purchase it, it's my personal opinion, if we don't purchase it now, it's very hard for a future developer to come in and have to deal with what the City owns, what the private seller wants to sell that for. It's a lot better for a developer to start with a clean slate than to have to deal with different entities to try to accomplish a goal. I mean I don't want to sound snobbish, but at a million dollars it's a big, big piece of the puzzle, although it's only an acre of land. It's the major piece of land. So, we have bought properties in the past. Dale is talking about Rockside Road, that northwest quadrant, that's a totally different ballgame. That is something that the City is not going to develop on their own. I don't think that we would ever consider putting any type of housing down there. That's a totally different entity, and I am sure at some point the ship will sail for that northwest quadrant; but this is our downtown area. I believe this piece is a very, very important piece of what we need to accomplish what we are setting out to do.

Chairman Walchanowicz said I agree, and the biggest thing is our residents are, they are changing in age; it's the younger people who are buying or building these homes, and they are the ones who are questioning us when is something going to happen downtown because that's where they want to be able to go and congregate, talk, whatever they want to do, and that corner is the key corner for this whole project.

Economic Development Director Hyser said it provides 240 feet of space along Brecksville Road, that's a lot of store frontage. It provides multiple points for ingress/egress into the sides. While it is one acre, it's a very valuable one acre in terms of us being able to transform downtown; and to be that place. We look at ourselves and what do we want to be? Do we want to be a Chagrin Falls? Do we want to have that historic downtown? Do we want to be that destination place with that walkability, and if you ask anybody under the age of 50, I think my point on that changes from year to year. You want that walkability, and this gives us that opportunity to provide places for people to go. If you lived on Sunset, where can you walk to

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go? You can walk to Dairy King and that's it, and Romito's; but are you really going to take your pizza home? So, this gives that potential for some additional development along Brecksville and that historic downtown that we have been talking about for a number of years.

Councilperson Veverka said an additional question that I have relates to value as based on rentals. A wise man told me once if you take the rental value of the piece of the property, you multiply it times 8, it gives you a fairly realistic value of what the property might be; and that would put it somewhere in the three quarter of a million dollar range, rather than pushing a million.

Economic Development Director Hyser said unfortunately they have an appraisal, and so we have to kind of honor what the appraisal has come back with as well.

Councilperson Synek said I guess I will jump in with some comments if I may.

Chairman Walchanowicz said go ahead.

Councilperson Synek said I want to get it on record, I echo Councilperson Veverka's assessment, the City has a history of acquiring properties, but I can't think of one that we successfully turned around and built something on, whether it be the Kuhn property, the C&B garage going back to the 1990's. I am sitting in my office here looking out at the Duke Realty property. We have millions of dollars in the ground, and this looks like just another project that we are going to put more money into the ground. Contrary to what some others have said here, this parcel of land is at the corner of a 17 acre parcel of property. It is not dead center, it's at the corner; so the worst case if you had to build around it, you probably could, but I also think that if we actually have a concrete plan of what we want to do on the 17 acres, this decision becomes a lot easier. It just seems premature; personally I would much rather see the City pay a premium 5 years from now for this property when we know for certain that we absolutely need it than gamble a million dollars today on a project that may never happen.

Economic Development Director Hyser said one thing I will say about corner lots is that in commercial development, the corners are always evaluated higher; and it's because of the multiple points of ingress and egress.

Councilperson Synek said it's not like there's no other access to the 17 acres. There is already free access off of Stone Road and off of Brecksville Road. If you want to do something on the other property, this ownership of this corner doesn't prohibit any further development of the other 17 acres; and we are not even near a development plan for the other 17 acres that are there on the middle school property.

Again, I just reiterate, if we had a plan of exactly what we wanted to do on that 17 acres, acquiring this property would make more sense; but for right now where we are at in developing the other 17 acres, it's just far too speculative for my taste.

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Chairman Walchanowicz said well I think that's where Councilperson Trakas wants to put in a timetable, something to kind of keep things moving; and if it doesn't, we have renewed leases, and we can put it back up for sale if we don't get anything done in the next couple of years.

Councilperson Synek said this is not a property that is easy to sell obviously. It has an EPA history on it. The current owners apparently had it for sale for a period of time. If it were that desirable of a property, somebody else would have bought it before the City; and I just don't see the reason to rush.

Economic Development Director Hyser said the one concern that you might want to take into consideration too is as continue to develop plans for the area, we can't develop plans unless we know what property we do own, and that will dictate the development. If we are only going to put together a development plan for the parcels that we own that kind of leaves this corner out, and then it makes it more difficult to, even if we do acquire it to make that new piece fit into that puzzle; and the frontage then on Brecksville Road with the visual appeal of that area would change.

Councilperson Synek said I wonder if this might be a good time for Mr. O'Brien to perhaps speak to the concept of eminent domain. If the City did have a real need for that property, what are the City's options, not only for that property, but then there's 3 or 4 residences on Stone Road that are also going to be part of this same discussion. So, Mr. O'Brien can you bring us up to speed on eminent domain? What would happen if we had to have ownership of these properties to do what we wanted to do? What are our options?

Law Director O'Brien said well it all depends on what the City wants to use that particular property for. We certainly can acquire the property for eminent domain if it's going to be a public purpose. So, just for the sake of discussion purposes, an example, if those properties were acquired by eminent domain will be the designed park for the public, not a problem. Unfortunately, if we are going to acquire the property to hand it over to a developer in and which it's not a public use, it's maybe even a private/public combined use for profit purposes, the only way we could appropriate eminent domain the property is through a blight study with the conclusion that those properties are blighted; and that's a rather onerous process, but it can be done. I don't know enough about the properties here, whether or not we would be successful in that.

Economic Development Director Hyser said and it also has an impact on us doing future development. Once you start using eminent domain for economic development purposes, people get afraid of doing development in your community.

Councilperson Synek asked have discussions already begun with the residential property owners who are on Stone Road, the north side of Stone Road? I see the appraisal that we got was dated February 26<sup>th</sup>, so apparently these discussions have been going on for a while, but have discussions also started with the homeowners?

Chairman Walchanowicz asked do you know the answer to that one?

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Mayor Kurtz said formally no, informal, episodic discussions over the last several years, but nothing of concrete nature such as this.

Law Director O'Brien said the Law Department has not been informed or been asked to do any legal work regarding those residential homes.

Chairman Walchanowicz said okay.

Vice Mayor Grendel joined the meeting.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked is there anything that you want to know about this property?

Vice Mayor Grendel said well the only thing, I noticed in my packet I didn't receive an appraisal over the weekend, and that I just didn't have a chance. I have been busy the first couple of days with legal things; but the more I thought about this situation, and the outlay of a million dollars and everything, I know Jim I think at one time you brought up that you would prefer that the City be more a facilitator between the potential developer and the owner of the property than the City going and spending that money buying that property. To me, we have bought so much property over the last 40 years downtown there, and what do we have to show for it, not much. I think we need, the first thing is that with this group that we hired to do the planning, we do have to have a plan that we can all get behind, or at least a consensus to get behind and then work with potential developers to make that a reality without actually buying all the land up ourselves.

I definitely am for some housing in the back. The more I think about it, if this election in November goes south, and Mr. Biden and his group get in, it scares me half to death of what they might do to a suburb like Independence or similar ones like us as far as housing and things go like that. I think we need to come up with a plan that we endorse, that we can have hopefully for our residents and people who want to live in Independence who can afford these smaller homes and everything. I think we should go gung ho with it, but I am a little leery, especially with all the infrastructure problems we have, the flooding problems we have. I know that we are going to need to have money set aside to take care of the continual deterioration of our infrastructure. So, that's an important issue too.

I am for the downtown development area and discussed with the Mayor some of the ideas; but I am just wondering if it's the right vehicle for the City to buy all this property up or is it better for us to work with a reputable, or a few reputable developers to get the best possible deal for the City that way.

Economic Development Director Hyser said one thing I would just like to add to that point is about property acquisition. A lot developers are hesitant to go out there and do the property acquisition; and so this takes that burden off of them if we have already acquired the property and are able to give them basically a turnkey site.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we have to be committed because we had owned all that property downtown for years and years. We have had the middle school property for at least 20 years now. The property across the street we acquired, and we need to be committed and gung ho. That

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has to be our number one priority to get that, get a plan developed and of course get input from the community. We have to be committed. We can't let a few people steer us against something like that. We do need to have a plan there, and I think it's a little bit of housing, some retail and commercial and even some greenspace there too would be ideal. I think now we have to turn those back to lip service to act on this.

I am a little hesitant about spending that money for land acquisition unless we are ready to go forward in the next couple of years to make it a reality.

Chairman Walchanowicz said before you were able to jump on, Councilperson Trakas had mentioned about writing legislation, putting a timetable on the property that you would have so long to get something, the shovel in the ground, otherwise we put it back up for sale. I don't know how you feel towards that.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I definitely, for people to get the trust of our residents, we need to be solid behind a plan for that area that we feel is best and stick with it and be determined to see that accomplished. So, we have done that on other issues. I know we can do it, we just have to be committed. I know that the downtown area, like Brecksville has two major roads there with a lot of traffic and an intersection; but we can still be able to have a nice downtown. We are close enough to Rockside and that area there that we can attract some people for some of our amenities, and if we have enough people there, the walkability of that would make it a nice quaint downtown area. We just have to be committed to do it. I think now that we have the possibility and capability, I think it's the time, we have so many people who left this town over the last years and spend their last years of life somewhere else. I think a good many of them would spend it here in Independence with their friends and family.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked anything else?

Mayor Kurtz said Mr. Chairman I think that the Vice Mayor and members of Council have voiced their opinion, and it makes sense. I think the one takeaway is the commitment. We have to have the commitment to move forward in lock step and check off a number of goals, keeping our residents in the City, livability, community enhancement, cleaning up. There are just so many things, but I think it starts with the comment that was made appropriately by several members of Council, look if there's no commitment, then we are just buying another piece of property. I think we have to have a commitment, and you took the first step last month by bringing on Dimit. That was the first step. This is the second step, and I think we need to watch this evolve; and everybody has to weigh in and buy in, and at the end of the day, I still think it presents a tremendous opportunity, a multi-faceted opportunity for us to do something more dynamic than what we have had.

Chairman Walchanowicz said I agree. Is there anything else?

Mayor Kurtz said Jessica will get those answers to those questions that we weren't able to answer, value and rentals. We will be able to collect all that data and submit it to Council.

Economic Development Director Hyser said absolutely.

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Councilperson Synek said I would just point out that much of that information is in the appraisal report from the company that did the appraisal.

Mayor Kurtz said you are correct. That's right.

Councilperson Synek said it's in there, I saw it.

Councilperson Trakas said there was some similar information, but it wasn't quite what my question was about. It wasn't quite the same parcel, but you are right Councilperson Synek. I think there are other data that would be helpful.

Economic Development Director Hyser said and if there's any other data that you would like clarified, feel free to reach out to me via e-mail, and I will make sure that everyone gets a copy of that.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked anything else? Otherwise we will move on to the second part of the agenda.

We are going to move on to the GPD part of the agenda. I know we have somebody on from GPD today, correct Dennis?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said that is correct. Joe Steinus, he is the Project Manager. As a matter of fact, he met with the Police Chief and Fire Chief today to further work on developing plans for security and modifications to the building. Debi, if you would unmute Joe, and Joe can kind of bring everyone up to speed.

Mr. Steinus said as Dennis mentioned, I am Joe Steinus of the GPD Group. We are working on a facilities assessment study that comes on a lot of buildings that the City owns. The study has taken a bit longer than I expected, so I will admit that; but we plan on having everything back to me which is due this week. So, it will go to quality control. I see no reason why this should not be published by mid next week, with the holiday, I will say Wednesday. I will get that in Dennis' hand, and he can distribute it to the group as he sees fit.

Also like you mentioned, we recently added on some security studies for City Hall itself. I met with both Chiefs today; and we put together, which I think is a pretty good plan. It includes some of the easy stuff like access control of doors and cameras and some physical barriers such as bollards in the front and security film on the windows, some intrusion detection, all the typical stuff.

We also have a plan started, and we will include this plan in the report that we are submitting next week as well with a floor plan of City Hall. It includes an emergency plan in case of a panic situation. So, we look at obviously emergencies in a form of fire. The code dictates that. What code doesn't dictate is what happens if there is an intruder or an event within the building that could harm the occupants, requiring either emergency egress or a secure in place.

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Working with the Fire Chief, I believe we have a plan to compartmentalize the building. Basically what it sets up is that if there was an intruder, there would be panic buttons that certain staff members would have access to. Pushing that would put the building in panic mode and compartmentalize the building so that the intruder would not have free reign of the building, and as he tries to move through the building, would end up finding his way out of the building, not into the rest of the building. I think it will probably be more clear once we have a plan in front of everybody, and they can see how that works.

That's the gist of it. Like I said, we are putting that schematic plan together now, and that will be ready next week for everyone's review. Like I said, there are many parts to this; so it will be kind of a grocery list as far as what the City may or may not want to make part of an actual plan.

Are there any questions?

Councilperson Narduzzi asked are you looking at that same plan for the Civic Center?

Mr. Steinus said we have not looked at that. We are doing an assessment of the Civic Center for maintenance and some programmatic suggestions, but not for security at this point.

Mayor Kurtz said I know there has been \$165,000 appropriated for City Hall, but has anything been set aside for security and upgrades to the Civic Center?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said every building has some funding set aside for security and upgrades. One of the things that GPD is working on with any presentations or proposals they put together, it's something that will be scalable so that if we put cameras in City Hall, those cameras would be the same cameras and system that will be able to be used by the Community Services side, Recreation, the parks and so forth. So, it will be a scalable plan.

Councilperson Trakas said with respect to that, I think it's important that we do come up with a Civic Center plan sooner than later. Obviously City Hall with the Police station it is important, and we have people working in the building; but the Civic Center really represents a soft target, and the Recreation Department is a soft target. The shooter in Virginia who shot up that softball game that the congressional people were working on, that was an open field. You have the daycare center. I really think that the Civic Center is a high priority, and that's where most of our residents would congregate. They wouldn't necessarily be coming to City Hall. So, in my opinion, I think that's something that we should be prioritizing as it relates to your report, and what I think we have to talk about terror attacks, egress entrance as well, but also people who come in who are armed and dangerous and what you can do with them, protecting our employees, but also protecting the general public. I think that has to be a really high priority.

Mayor Kurtz said good point. I know at the Civic Center for Councilperson Trakas, Mr. Chairman we did talk about creating that new entrance, single entrance, as a safety measure. I am not sure if Dennis that's still was discussed more recently, but I know several years ago, enclosing that canopy area as a safety measure. That was one discussion.

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Councilperson Trakas said Mayor, to complement your point there, then you can put in a security system that allows people to have a checkpoint basically. So, if maybe if you have a City ID, and you swipe your City ID, you can get through the door; and if you don't have a City ID, you can't get through the door, and you have a second layer of security. Do you know what I mean?

There's a school out in Richmond Heights, and that's what we did where there are two sets of doors, and if you don't have a, as my dad used to say, no ticky no laundry. You don't have the right ID, you can't get in the first door, but if accidentally get in, you aren't getting through the second door. So, there is that extra measure. I think that's important.

Mayor Kurtz said Dennis could speak to that. I think it was enclosing that existing canopy area, repurposing that, and creating a new canopy for weather prevention measures over the existing turnaround.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said Joe you might be able to address this a little bit and add a little bit more to this. You know, one of the reasons why we chose to go with GPD, they have a great deal of experience working in courthouses, schools and such which would basically fit our needs and desires. I know that Council, they were very eager to move forward with security for the Community Services side and the Recreation side of the building, and I am sure that GPD would be more than happy to help us put something together with those properties. Joe, if you could tell everyone on board now what your experience has been with the Akron courthouse and so forth. You can take it from there.

Mr. Steinus said and I agree with everything said about the Civic Center being a soft target. There's a lot of people who go in and out, and it's people that you don't necessarily expect to be there on a day-to-day basis like at City Hall you know everyone who works at City Hall knows everybody else generally. That poses some extra security issues at the Civic Center. We did discuss the entrance like you mentioned, and that is included in the report. Most of it, I want to say a large percentage of that is for functionality and programming. It's intent isn't solely for security, although it does, like you mentioned, provide an element of security.

As Dennis said, we would be happy to expand the work done at the Civic Center to include some additional security suggestions as we are doing with City Hall.

Chairman Walchanowicz said Dennis I just talked with Maggie, and we do have about \$150,000 in general upgrade funds for the Civic Center. So, maybe we can use some of that towards a definite upgrade to the security for them.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said I know there's money set aside for various projects over there, and I know security was a big interest of Council and the Mayor.

Councilperson Trakas asked were they looking at energy as well? Joe, were you looking at energy efficiency as well as the general buildings? I remember that conversation.

Mr. Steinus said we take into account the energy used for HVAC and lighting and certainly will mention that. There's no energy modeling included in the study where we actually produce an energy model in 3D and simulate energy usage. That could be something that we could look at in

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the future; but in general, we do note the efficiencies or inefficiencies of the equipment and use that information to prioritize some of the suggested repairs.

Councilperson Trakas said Technical Service has done a remarkable job over the last several years of swapping out inefficient for efficient; but we certainly would like to get your opinion as to what we need to do, but Dave Snyderburn has really been on top of this. I thought he has done a really excellent job of proactively working to save energy costs and to provide better lighting for sure. I know they are replacing chiller systems and everything else. It would be interesting to see what you come up with on that.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked does anybody have any other questions for Joe? It sounds like we will look forward to seeing that report in the next week.

Mr. Steinus said yes.

Mayor Kurtz said it would be great Joe, and then we can continue to implement some of these issues; but I think I agree with Councilperson Trakas. The Civic Center also has to be something, especially if we can do something while this Covid limits access. At least at City Hall, it's been to our advantage, having our own people being able to do some of the stuff. So, if we could do something like that at the Civic Center, I think timing is everything. We won't have all the crowds right now. I am not sure if that's even a possibility Joe or Dennis, but I think the timing would be good.

Councilperson Synek said may I just make a bit of a counter proposal about the security at the Civic Center. The Civic Center is a very public space, and we don't want to turn it into a fortress. It needs to be, we have a welcoming community. Neighbors know neighbors and watch out for neighbors. What I worry about is turning the Civic Center into some sort of fortress where people are immediately made to feel unsafe and unwelcome the second they walk in the door. There has to be security, don't get me wrong; but whatever we do security wise, we have to approach it with the keeping of the community spirit, the welcoming feature of a community center. It's where we all come together as a community. So, I will say that again in the spirit of let's not turn the place into a fortress, do what's prudent, what's right, what's reasonable; but we can't turn the Civic Center into a fortress either.

Mayor Kurtz said from my perspective it's more of in talking to the Department Heads, it's about efficiency and combining front desks into a more efficient layout for our people to come in and out.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said you know Mayor if I might also add, that's one of the reasons why Joe did the walk through today with Police and Fire so that he gets their input as to what they feel is most important, what will still be a good representation of our community and yet it will protect our residents and give the appearance of being an open community but yet providing safety at the same time.

Mr. Steinus said if I could add, like Dennis mentioned, we work a lot with schools, and it's the same concept there. We don't want a school to feel like a fortress. A courthouse or City Hall,

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maybe it can get a little bit of that feel; but certainly Civic Centers and schools I completely agree. There is a lot of good security that can be transparent and really on a day-to-day use don't even know it's there. Really lots of glass, people think of that as being unsecure; but in some cases, it provides line of sight and eliminates places for people to hide and things like that. Openness, doors that close when they are needed, but they are kept open for the rest of the time. Cameras and access control, and things like that are intended to provide security without making it feel like you are in a prison.

Councilperson Trakas said just to follow up on that Joe, I think cameras are particularly effective. Are your reports going to also have those as well?

Mr. Steinus said we certainly recommend them. We are not locating cameras or suggesting how many you need, but we are suggesting the budget for them.

Councilperson Veverka said in addition to the Civic Center, are there complications as it relates to Cuyahoga County Public Library which shares the building as far as any particular rules that they might have because they know through the courtyard that is our other access point through the library.

Councilperson Trakas said good point. We own the building, but it would be good to at least have that conversation with them.

Chairman Walchanowicz said yes, it's probably a conversation we should have with the library.

Councilperson Veverka said because we could do a pretty comprehensive job. I know the Mayor has suggested, and it's a great idea of combining the entryway and being able to have Community Services and Recreation kind of work together side by side with the front access, that would be helpful. Bear in mind that the doors to the back, frequently I will go into the Civic Center through the library and then walk across through those doors. So, it becomes another point of entry to pay attention to. There are other entry doors around the edge of the library that will get you into the Civic Center if I'm not mistaken. So, it will have to be more comprehensive. It's not a freestanding facility.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said I will do some research. I will contact the library and find out who would be their contact for security, and I will make sure that I pass that information onto Joe. Joe could get with them and find out what their requirements are so we can work together and get the best for both facilities.

Chairman Walchanowicz said thanks Dennis. Is there anything else or any other questions for GPD?

Are there any other matters that anybody wants to talk about?

Councilperson Veverka said Chairman I have a question. The most recent meeting we had with discussions related to the cemetery, and I am just curious of what further developments have

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happened there related to the fence, or related to columbarium or related to either proposal about a different type of thing for ashes. I am just curious if anything has progressed in those areas.

Chairman Walchanowicz said I know the Mayor had gotten together with the Directors to see some of the information. I am not sure if, Mayor have you gotten any of that information back through Tech or the Service Department?

Mayor Kurtz said the short answer is no. The more involved answer is just in the process. I would hope that and encourage everyone to have some data points back to us in the next 30 or 60 days. The goal would be to have some plan to present to Public Lands and Buildings next quarter this year so that we can actually implement something. If it's a columbarium wall, some alternative to just straight burial or cremation; a columbarium wall would probably be the easiest lift before mausoleum or additional expansion. That's the direction we are headed right now, but the short answer is no.

Councilperson Veverka asked and what about the fence? The conversation related to the fence was a hearty one.

Mayor Kurtz said Councilperson Veverka I think Dave Snyderburn is the one who is researching the cost of that fence. We have been focusing on the next generation of burial options that I think you and others presented. We are just not there yet.

Councilperson Veverka said thank you.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked is there anything else?

Mayor Kurtz said the other thing is that we did just by way of information, the 32 acres on Rockside Road that's under contract; there was information that was submitted by the developer, and we are reviewing that at this time. We have nothing concrete, but that property I believe the last Council put that under contract.

Councilperson Veverka asked is there a way that you can kind of give us a little more background on what direction that might be going?

Mayor Kurtz said you know, under the terms of their contract, there are certain thresholds as I am sure all of Council had voted on it; but for those who didn't vote on it, there are certain thresholds that they have to meet in order to keep this option active; and one of them was to submit a preliminary drawing. There are a few complications or opportunities. We did talk about the money that was earmarked from the Federal Government, the \$7,500,000 that was earmarked years ago when I testified in Washington for ingress and egress from the interstate. We did find out, they did some more research and found out that money was re-appropriated. So, we have to start from scratch there, but we outlined several different options for them to look at, more in line with today's opportunities for traffic management where we think ODOT could create some (inaudible) some of these less intrusive options, and with the new I-480 bridge configuration, there may be some opportunity now with the residual ramp space that is available west of I-77 that ODOT usually earmarked for their own use. With the new bridge configuration, the way it's

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going to blend in, it's going to open up in October, it clears the air in terms of what ODOT might do to support some type of ingress and egress into that northwest quadrant, thereby eliminating some of the congestion on I-480 and I-77 once it gets off to Rockside.

Suffice to say, with our new Economic Development Director, and we introduced her to the developer. There are a lot of moving parts right now so nothing to report that is exceptional, either positive or negative. It's just part of the process at this point.

Councilperson Synek asked is there any update on the house at 6248 Brecksville, next to Chase Bank? Any plans to do anything further? I think the title has transferred if I am not mistaken. What is the next step?

Mayor Kurtz said the title is transferred. Don Ramm could speak to that more specifically. Two things we were focusing on was getting the asbestos assessment and also the drainage. You might have seen some work in that area recently. We have been trying to ascertain the condition and the capacity of the drainage in that area; and so that we come back to Council and Utilities Committee, we can show them a complete solution in terms of water mitigation, management. So, we are still in the throws of putting things together for demolition.

Councilperson Synek said thank you.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked anything else?

Mayor Kurtz said there are a number of things Jessica is working on in terms of the most recent request. She gets requests all the time from both developers, end users, retailers. The most recent one, and she can collaborate or just let it take its course, there is a grant that allows for electrical charging systems out that, it has to be on municipal property. So, we are just looking at the different pieces that we have available to see if that's even. I know there's nothing on the I-77 corridor from Cleveland to at least, I am not even sure, Montrose or something in that area for electric cars, charging stations. So, we are looking at that. It's just one of those little sidebar issues that creep up.

Economic Development Director Hyser said there's a grant application that's available. It relates to the Volkswagen issue. So, Volkswagen settled from when they had their gas mileage information rigged. There's a possibility of a grant. It's due at the end of September, but as the Mayor did mention, one of the key factors is that it does need to be on City property. So, we are kind of going through the process of exploring what we need to do to apply for that grant. We think that it could be a differentiator as the Mayor indicated. There isn't something like this in the area. The land on Rockside, there is obviously a large number of vehicles that travel that corridor, so it could be a differentiator if the City had this amenity available to those who work and visit the community.

Mayor Kurtz this little sidebar Mr. Chairman, I know the Economic Development Director is utilizing her experience and her hometown knowledge; and she is bombarded with a lot of different requests, questions; and I really have come to appreciate her level of intensity and her understanding of the business world and economic development.

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Chairman Walchanowicz said I think she has done a great job so far.

Economic Development Director Hyser said thank you.

Councilperson Veverka said I just have a quick question. Mr. Mayor, is the Service Department handling the landscaping in front of the house? Is it looking good?

Mayor Kurtz said they were supposed to get the grass cut yesterday. It's going to be one of those things that we just keep it maintained until such time that the next step is done.

Chairman Walchanowicz said sounds good.

Mayor Kurtz said you are going to see several ordinances that we have talked about in the past, but they are going to hit in September at least for First Reading, and then public hearings on sign ordinances and different things we have been talking about for a long time, just trying to put some teeth into some of our framework or rules so that we can continue methodically work on addressing the condition of our community in terms of appearance, and signage is a big issue. So, we will look at, people are entitled to their political signs, but they are not entitled to put them on the City's right-of-way. So, in a respectful way we will move those signs off the tree lawns and into people's front yards, hopefully they get the message that they are not allowed on public property.

Councilperson Narduzzi said one thing before we leave the meeting. Did anybody notice the French fry stand set up at Sunoco on Hillside and 21?

Vice Mayor Grendel said it's been there about a week.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked do they need a permit to do that?

Chairman Walchanowicz said they were in Brecksville at Wasko's last week, and now they are by us.

Chairman Walchanowicz asked do they have to pull a permit for that Mayor?

Mayor Kurtz said I don't know that answer, but I will get it for you.

Councilperson Trakas said they would definitely fall under our ordinance with respect to having the food truck. Any time you talk about food distribution, you have to make sure you inspect it and pull permits.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think they plan to be there for a couple of weeks. That's what I heard.

Councilperson Narduzzi said it kind of looks tacky to me, having a French fry stand with flashing lights and stuff set up at a gas station.

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Chairman Walchanowicz said why don't we call an end to this one since Councilperson Veverka has to start his meeting up in a few minutes.

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

There being no further business, the Public Lands & Buildings meeting of September 1, 2020 was adjourned at 3:24 p.m.

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Debra J. Beal, Clerk of Council  
Minutes Unapproved at Time of Release 09/02/20

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