

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE  
COUNCIL WORKSHOP MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 8, 2022, AT 3:30 P.M.  
COUNCIL CAUCUS ROOM & VIA ZOOM**

Councilperson Chris Walchanowicz called the Council Workshop to order at 3:33 p.m. Present were Council Members John DiGeronimo, Anthony Togliatti (arrived at 3:35 p.m.), Jim Trakas, Dale Veverka (arrived at 3:35 p.m.) and Tom Narduzzi. Also in attendance were Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz, Community Services Director Emily Thomas, Service Director Ron McKinley, Assistant Community Services Director Amber Veverka, Procurement Coordinator Dennis Zdolshek and Building and Engineering employee Jim Riley.

Councilperson Chris Walchanowicz said that there's only one agenda item today, and it is the 2022-2023 snowplowing. He said there have been a lot of changes in terms of costs. I will let Dennis and Emily explain that. We are lacking contractors as we all know. So, we will figure that out. Dennis has an idea for that.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said earlier this week Ron, Emily and I we met to kind of review the bids that we received for snowplowing, and see if we could come up with a solution to the situation. The bid went out, it was emailed to 12 contractors. Additionally, another 2 contractors had contacted the City and wanted to participate in the bid; but the end result was that only 4 contractors bid, and the total capacity bid by the 4 contractors was over 500 driveways. Based on last year's number, we would need a capacity of at least 725, and Emily has done some math on that. If we increased that number by the number of residents that turn 60 this year, we will probably be in the neighborhood of 800 driveways to service.

Over the last couple of years, there's been a decline in the number of contractors to submit bids for the program. So, we are faced with a pretty big shortage of contractors that handle 200 driveways. We have looked at a number of different options that are out there.

Councilperson Trakas asked we are short about 200?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said we are short about 200, and we looked at a number of options that are available out there; and we just kind of would like to share thoughts and see what Council, how Council wishes to move forward with this.

Councilperson DiGeronimo asked how many contractors did we use last year?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said I believe 6.

Councilperson DiGeronimo asked the ones that have fell off, if you said the bids have been going, the number of contractors interested in the last couple of years, what do you think is behind that? Do you think it's related to costs or they are just not that interested or they are plowing on their own?

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Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said it's a number of different things. Some of these contractors, the program wasn't as profitable as they had anticipated. I think it's a demanding program. There is a pretty demanding, a high demand expected by our residents. I think for what the contractors were bidding, they couldn't provide the expected service at what they were bidding, and I think instead of raising their price, they realized that it would be more profitable to operate as a private contractor as opposed to subcontracting for the City and due to labor shortages.

He said I will add that I did contact the 4 vendors that did bid this year, one of them did pick up an additional 30 driveways. Frank Allega is willing to pick up an additional route, and I spoke with a Carl Bartlett. He had contacted me. We had a couple of discussions. He is interested in looking to see what the program entails and would be happy to participate in it.

To that extent, we need to figure out the proper way to fill this gap, and I can't speak from a legal standpoint, and what Emily and Ron and I have talked about is awarding contracts for the routes that we have bids currently and rebidding the routes that we don't have contracts for. That would allow Frank Allega to bid the route that he is interested in and some other routes. It would be a competitive process. Also, that would allow us to open it up to Carl Bartlett that had contacted me, and then my intention would be to reach out to everybody and anybody that has a plow and get an invitation to bid in front of them. I think that to try to change the bid specifications and change the parameters of what it takes to participate in the program. At this stage of the game, it would be a little bit too late for that, and I talked with Emily and Ron, right now we have 7 routes that aren't covered. If we can cover another of those 4 routes, we are only short coverage for 3 routes, and I think that might be a workable number for Ron and everybody to try and manage. To try to cover 200 driveways right now, we can't put that burden on the Service Department. They have enough with just keeping the sidewalks and properties.

Councilperson Trakas said as we go in this discussion, the Farmers' Almanac said it is going to be the worst winter in 40 years. So, whatever we do has to be pretty creative. We are going to be using these guys. When Anthony was Mayor, it didn't snow much. God was looking down upon us in that regard. When you need them, you need them.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said Frank would typically bid on every route, and there are 22 routes. This year he bid on 5 I believe just because he doesn't have the manpower, and he didn't want to take on more responsibility than he felt he could adequately do. I commend the guy for that.

Councilperson Togliatti said I'm sorry I arrived late, but the 3 on the front page, did you reach out to them to see if they had extra capacity?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said yes I did. On the back page is the fourth bidder which is Frank Allega. I spoke with all of these contractors. Dirt Works was able to pick up 30 driveways, one route, and Frank Allega said he could pick up another route. He was interested in

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Route 16, but because they didn't bid those, I just can't award them. We would be required to put it out for bid again, and hopefully we would get some additional interest.

Councilperson Trakas said I doubt that we are the only one having these troubles too.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said I spoke to actually the City of Cleveland, I have some connections there still. The City of Cleveland hires private contractors, and they can't find anybody for anything. They can't get truck drivers on a part-time basis. It is my understanding that ODOT is having issues trying to supplement their fleet for the winter. I think it's overall the way things are today.

Community Services Director Thomas said I think if you look at other programs around the County, ours is the only service that is offered to such a large demographic pool. The others are an income-based program, and that would not be a factor. So, these have a larger need to serve.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said another example is Brecksville has 60 compared to us. Theirs is strictly an income-based.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said Brecksville also uses HEAP.

Councilperson Trakas said that would be a pretty small group if we took HEAP.

Community Services Director Thomas said we had 2 people who qualified for HEAP last year. Based on our other records, we probably had 15 that could potentially qualify. Given the low cost of the program, not everybody feels the need to come forward.

Councilperson Trakas said one thing I was thinking is if these vendors aren't bidding because they don't think it could be profitable, maybe we could repeal the part of the ordinance that gives all the details and all that stuff, and let you guys figure out what you want to do. Maybe they might be more interested in bidding that way, and you might get more bids. I think that 2 passes, these guys are generally coming back. Sometimes they come back, and maybe they don't think it's as profitable. Maybe if you took off the table you might be able to get more bidders.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said you know we had talked about modifying the bid specifications, qualifications and all of that, but at this late stage of the game, we feel that it would probably be best to stay with the qualifications that we currently have and address that down the road in March or April. Our goal right now is to come up with a workable solution where we can deliver a quality service to our residents. I don't think that we can really address or change ordinances to that at this stage of the game.

Councilperson Trakas said if you took away the thing that said you had to do only 2 passes, that way it gives you some flexibility to bid it differently, so that maybe more people might be able to bid is what I was thinking.

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Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said that would probably require a change in the ordinance and everything, and which would probably delay the rebid getting out there because depending on what decision Council comes up with today, and the Mayor, it would be my intention to get this thing out for rebid tomorrow.

Community Services Director Thomas said we did meet with the contractors back in July, and based on the feedback that we received, and please correct me if I am wrong, I don't think the bid specs were so much the challenge as the high expectations of our residents in our community, given that the snowplowing services was always an emergency service, but the expectation is (inaudible). I think, and again correct me if I am wrong, but having the contractors come back again, that was it.

Service Director McKinley said that a resident pulled his car around, so they can plow it and parked behind it and trapped the plow driver in the driveway to plow additional snow. Then the contractor got chased down the road by another lady, so they are kind of getting fed up with this.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said that's what I heard from the contractors that didn't bid.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said in essence, the complaints Marie has gotten, and Marie fields all the complaints. I would go out to the address, take a look, take pictures and whatever; and I am willing to say that 99.9% of the time the contractors went above and beyond what they were required to do to provide the service.

Jim Riley said just in that meeting that I sat in on with the contractors, I think the route I would have bid on if I was to get this service, my driveway would have been \$13 to \$15, but Nick Hogler who plows said he would charge me \$35. It's not worth doing for \$13 and \$15, whereas he could go and do it privately for \$35 to \$50 a drive, he was making more money, and he will clean it up better. The expectation, and I know what you guys are thinking, I was on Council, getting out and shoveling away from the drive and doing all that, you can't do that for \$15 or \$20. It is just too much time.

Councilperson Narduzzi said that's not what the program is about. It's about getting our emergency vehicles to them if they need. That's how this whole thing started way back when, and now it's escalating into this.

Mayor Kurtz said concierge service.

Councilperson Narduzzi said that's ludicrous for \$15.

Service Director McKinley said when they call 25 times screaming, you go shovel the walk to their front door.

Mr. Riley said and I have gone out last year when the Mayor sent me out or Dar or anyone if they called, there is a house, it's across from Don Ramm's up there. She has a bridge and everything. If I was a private contractor, I would tell her \$200. It is scary to get across. To do

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that, I was scared of sliding off that bridge. It's not worth that to bid something like that. It's a great service if you are the resident, but as far as cost effectiveness and what you have to do.

Community Services Director Thomas said I really think we are kind of two-fold, how do we execute the program this year because even if we go back out with 7 routes to bid, and nobody bids, we still have driveways. Also, it's an opportunity to look at the program holistically, whether that's the specs for future or the eligibility requirements, if it's income-based or age or whatever it might be. This would be the opportunity then to look at these issues.

Councilperson Trakas said we have an immediate issue, and I hope you think we will solve it by rebidding.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said well it's my intention to request legislation for Tuesday's meeting to award the routes that we can cover, and then rebid those 7 routes that we don't have contractors for. We will have to come back and re-award them, but I do have a commitment for 3 of those 7 remaining routes, tentative commitment. We still have to go through the process, we will have to submit the bid, but verbally they said they would be interested.

Service Director McKinley said which might cut it in half hopefully, we will still be over 100 driveways short, not counting the 80 that are still eligible to sign up.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said we still need to kind of come up with a Plan B.

Several people began speaking at once.

Community Services Director Thomas said so I ran the report for 60 year-olds, and that's the number that came out. That data does not include anyone in their household who has someone under the age of 60 which would disqualify them. That's just the worst case scenario.

For example, if you looked at the Excel sheet which is attached this email, the first page is 2021-2022 date, and you can look at the next sheet which is the estimated for this year. If we would raise the age to 70, we would go from 790 to 512. That's again something to think about as we talk about how we can best provide this service to our community. Again, that's an estimate, but it's (inaudible).

Councilperson Togliatti asked and we could legally break up this bid, award half of it and rebid because there are bids that are submitted, but I guess their capacity doesn't allow.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said their capacity doesn't allow it, correct. I will contact Greg O'Brien, but it is my understanding that we are able to do that because we are only awarding a portion of it. I don't believe we need to rebid the whole bid.

Councilperson Trakas said it might be beneficial.

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Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said I think that the risk we would run if we rebid the whole thing is (a) the contractors that bid this time around are going to bump the price up. These guys are really scrambling, and that's a risk we take; or (b) they might just say that I don't even want to monkey around with this, I am going to go out after private accounts myself. The program is what it is. This year we know it's going to be 750 driveways that we have a commitment to take care of. Even though the people haven't signed up yet, in their minds the City has a commitment to take care of those driveways. So, if we can take care of 500 of those driveways, and we only have to worry about another 250, we are in a better position than rebidding the whole thing and ending up with only 300 driveways. That is just my thought.

Community Services Director Thomas said and I think every option is on the table as we discuss it, and it's just thinking about that worst case scenario if we go out and we bid and have nobody come back.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said Plan B can't be having Service guys go out and do those 250 driveways because we just don't have the manpower there.

Councilperson Trakas said maybe the VIP Program and maybe some of the schools. If all else fails, we try to get people to try to help their neighbors out and compensate for it. I used to shovel driveways all through Dalebrook. It was a buck a driveway. Why couldn't we hire somebody like that? If you need people, you might have to have a contingency then.

Councilperson Togliatti said so I see in this email the number of individuals below 60 includes City employees, and how many City employees do we plow?

Community Services Director Thomas replied 9. Not every City employee chooses to take advantage of the service.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mr. Riley said I think years ago the Police had it in their contract.

Community Services Director Thomas said the only information that is out there is the information in the Spotlight where it says registration is October 3<sup>rd</sup>. We have already had multiple calls every day asking about the application, but it is not out there yet.

Councilperson Narduzzi said so we either raise the year or we raise the price.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said if we raise the year, we will have to rebid the whole contract because it will change the number of participants on a route, and there would be no way to adjust the routes for the contractors because currently a contractor bids on a route, like Route 10, and there are 24 houses. We would probably go through the exercise seeing how many 70 year-olds fall on that route, and how many participated in the program and we would adjust that number.

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Councilperson Trakas said they also know the homes, they know the driveways. I am sure there is a cost variance that some of the routes may be more expensive because they are longer driveways.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said and there was. We had bids for \$19 and as high as \$40 a push, like the driveways that are on Pleasant Valley that are longer. They are in that group of routes, and those will be at the higher end.

Mayor Kurtz said so you are suggesting that we accept the bids for the known quantities, and then we put a new bid out for the ones that we don't have locked in. We see how many bidders we have. We already know that at least one or two of them will have extra routes. You want to get more bidders, and we might have more.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said my intention would be to reach out to everybody, I would go through the phone book, or online, sorry Emily.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said I have contacted everybody that has been involved in the last 3 or 4 years.

Councilperson Togliatti asked would Council consider removing Route 22 which is the municipal lots? It's Historic Hall, Old Town Hall, and apparently we are still plowing the cat shelter and the pre-school coop.

Mayor Kurtz asked is that one route? Who handles that?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said it's Dirt Works.

Councilperson Togliatti said but to take care of those lots, the Historic Hall is not a priority in a snow event, and then you could re-allocate Dirt Works to another route.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said he was picking that up in addition to whatever he had. He said his capacity was 120, but he picked up an extra 30 and was at 150, plus he was doing the City lots.

Mayor Kurtz said we could take that one off. We could do that internally.

Community Services Director Thomas said Director Walchanowicz said already that he would be willing to do that one with his team.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said the only one that's necessary is the pre-school.

Mayor Kurtz said if Council agrees, we will eliminate that. That maybe frees up Dirt Works or whoever it is to pick up another route. It gives him more flexibility.

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Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said Ron how long do you think it takes to plow those?

Service Director McKinley said that's what I am looking at right now.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek asked an hour, two hours?

Service Director McKinley said a lot longer than that.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said what's nice now is the pre-school is a lot easier because it's not gravel anymore. That was paved.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Togliatti asked and we are doing the Kindl buildings apparently?

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said we could go and knock out the pre-school too.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said that would probably give him the capacity for maybe another 20 to 30 driveways. That's another route.

Mayor Kurtz said that's a good idea.

Community Services Director Thomas said Tom already offered on his own accord to do the other ones.

Mayor Kurtz said that's great. There's one solution. Dennis, can you handle that then? It gives the contractor the ability to do another route.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said he bid on every route that was available, but contractors often do that because they list their capacity, and when I award, I only award up to their capacity.

Mayor Kurtz asked if you take that one out, can you call him? Maybe he will be interested in taking another one right now before we re-bid it.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said I would certainly talk to him before.

Mayor Kurtz said maybe he will lock in for one or two. I agree, I think we eliminate that, take that off the books and ask him if he would be willing to take on one or two more routes. It minimizes our exposure. I am confident that he can do that, and Frank Allega will take on another. He would have to bid on it.

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Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek replied correct, and that is why it would have to go out to bid. The same thing, I was contacted by Carl Bartlett, he does snowplowing. He's a resident. He said he was interested.

Mayor Kurtz then we go out for bid, and Dirt Works wants more, we can give him more because he bid them right. So, you work your magic, and then we come up with what we are exposed, and then we bid it out. Under the current circumstances, we can at least go from this year, and we can learn a lot. I know there has been some suggestions of changing it to two inches and modifying it to be more comprehensive. Maybe we analyze it this year, if you are willing to be flexible. We analyze our performance this year, and we see the impact. We do an after-action study or during action study to see what it would take to do some of these more comprehensive approaches, what it would cost time wise, and a time analysis. So, we are sitting here next year, or at least in the spring, and we could do our analysis and say okay for \$25, or for an additional fee we could do "x" or "y" because it's going to cost these guys \$7. I think if we prepare our after-action analysis of what we want to accomplish with this during this season and willing to be flexible in terms of your proposed legislation so that we can use that as a template for next year and not have to take action on it, it will help us mold a more sustainable program. Does that make sense?

So, if I understand, we are going to get rid of the one route. We are going to do it internally. We are going to see what we can award through our current bidding. We will then re-bid and hopefully we will get enough suppliers willing to bid on them, and then we also prepare at that point what our goal is, how comprehensive we are going to be for the future. We will take into consideration Councilperson Trakas' suggestions in terms of how comprehensive, and we will get a cost. So, in the spring when we do our analysis, our after-action analysis, then we will be able to say here's what we discovered, here's the challenges, here's what it is going to cost. Then we should be in a position, Emily and our team, will then be able to say here's our recommendation. Or let's have a discussion right after, instead of waiting until this time next year, let's do it now. We will do it in the spring.

Councilperson Trakas said some of the folks on Rockside Road who have services, do we know who some of those folks are?

Mayor Kurtz said I am going to look everywhere.

Councilperson Trakas said some of those buildings, they are already in town doing parking lots, maybe they can also pick up some.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said that's a great idea.

Mayor Kurtz said Economic Development, Jess, talk to Irene. Maybe some of the smaller lots in the center of town that they are doing, maybe they may be willing to pick up a route.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said the only problem with a lot of those, they have commercial plows on those for those big lots which could range anywhere between a 10 foot plow with

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wings. They may be just too big for the driveways. That is something else we have to take into consideration when you are talking with these commercial contractors.

Mayor Kurtz said it's worth looking into.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek asked would Council be comfortable then after we remove the Route 22 which is the City buildings in the center of town, if I find out if Dirt Works was willing to pick up another route, if I submit a request for legislation for September for the routes that we have contractors for. I will re-bid the routes that we don't have contractors for, and I will reach out to the individuals that had contacted me and gave a verbal commitment to bid. I will try to get it out for bid. I think the soonest we could probably get it out would be Sunday, and it takes 22 days for the whole process. We would be able to have legislation in October.

Councilperson Trakas said we would have to right.

Mr. Riley said why don't you ask the guys who bid a route that it didn't get it, someone else got it, or their capacity, and see if they could go up a little bit.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said I called everybody, I spoke to everyone. I actually had to get Frank Allega's cell phone number before he got back to me. He's been busy.

Community Services Director Thomas asked in addition, is the group comfortable with us going out with the application for snow removal at the \$25 price point?

Councilperson Trakas said that's in ordinance, so you would have to change that.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I hear the average is (inaudible).

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I saw in the paperwork that the average was \$26.39 per push.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said I did that on the new awards with Frank picking up the extra route and that. It's going to definitely increase the cost, but at this time, you can't really change anything else.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said you had mentioned that last year that there were residents who signed up after the deadline. Is it possible to hold that to a hard capacity that we can't take any more.

Mr. Riley said you won't do it. You can say that. They are going to call any of you in this room, and they are going to call the Mayor's office, they are going to call there. We are going to go do them.

Several people began speaking at once again.

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Community Services Director Thomas said the one thing we did mention in the meeting is charging a late fee. That if residents signed up after October 31<sup>st</sup>, charging a \$25 late fee. We are going to be proactive in reaching out to every person.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Togliatti asked are there late fees involved in Recreation sign ups?

Several people began speaking at once again.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said we had talked about even increasing the participation fee from \$25 to \$50. The amount of any increase won't substantially change the cost of the program. It's not worth it to get beat up over \$10 or \$15.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I know, but that's not it, we are getting something totally different. If we have 10 or 12 pushes this year, we are pushing \$200,000.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said it would probably be about \$20,000 a snow event.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I don't think \$50 is a lot to ask for. I don't. I mean if they get 10 pushes, they are saving themselves \$500.

Mr. Riley said Councilperson Trakas with your stormwater idea, that's a third. How about splitting the cost per push?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said we will talk about that in March.

Councilperson Togliatti said they are already chasing the drivers down the street for \$25.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I'm saying at \$50 you might get some people dropping out of it.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said then they are going to want sidewalks done.

Mayor Kurtz said what we should do in the spring is tell people what we are going to be charging them next year so they know. They will know the price is going to go up.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked is there a minimum of how many routes they have to bid?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said no. We had talked about in the spring when we had met, seeing if we could get a contractor to bid all the routes, and it would be their responsibility and they would have to field all the calls and complaints and everything like that. I don't think there was a lot of interest on the contractors' parts. I think Frank Allega would have been the only one.

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Several people began speaking at once again.

Service Director McKinley said getting back to Emily's point though, if we did a \$25 late fee and just posted it, even though we weren't going to charge it, it may deter some.

Mayor Kurtz said we could post it.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Trakas said I don't have a problem stating that so you get people squared away because it's important we have to get a good number. We are on the margins here. I just want to make sure we have the authority.

Community Services Director Thomas said the other thing too, it wasn't that we were just going to charge a late fee and be done with it. We are going to proactively mail out all 790 applications. We are going to communicate that. It's going to be online. So, there are things that we are going to do to proactively connect with those individuals.

Service Director McKinley asked how many signed up late last year?

Community Services Director Thomas said over 200.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mr. Riley said no one thinks about it until it snows.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said that's what upsets the contractors because a lot of them are maxed out to capacity. They get an extra 10 or 15 driveways. When we had met in the spring they had said we don't want to take anything after the deadline. We planned accordingly, and then when you lay another 10 driveways on us. They have talked about if you sign up after a certain date, they want a premium for a driveway.

Mr. Riley said you can't blame them.

Service Director McKinley said legally they didn't bid them, so they don't have to take them. If we get another 200 late applicants on top of the 750 now, we are going to be pushing 1,000.

Councilperson Trakas said we have to really be proactive. Can we make phone calls and just get them signed up?

Community Services Director Thomas said we can get something out online and make phone calls.

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Councilperson Narduzzi said you are taking in \$25,000 with 1,000, and you are spending over \$200,000.

Councilperson Togliatti said it's not going to be 1,000.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said there are probably 3 or 4 routes that I can handle if push comes to shove, but I don't know if I am able.

Councilperson Togliatti said no.

Mayor Kurtz said you can do it, but you can't get paid.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I'm just trying to help.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Trakas said I think you have a very good plan.

Mayor Kurtz said if legislation gets passed, we charge. If we raise the price, would you be inundated or would you just be frustrated? Will people just vent or will they withdraw?

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said it was \$1, then \$15 and then \$25. For \$50 you can't get your driveway plowed.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I mean gas has gone up, groceries have gone up.

Mr. Riley said if we are going to raise it the way everything is inflated now.

Mayor Kurtz said if you are going to do this, then Council has to be unanimous because that way they can't pick or choose or point fingers at any of you and say look at Council unanimously supports it, I support it. There is no arguing.

Mr. Riley said or you can take the other approach with hey everything has gone, keep it the same this year, but there's a chance next year.

Mayor Kurtz said you lose your momentum then. If we are going to do that, we have to do it in the spring. We have to tell them.

Councilperson Trakas said I think we are going to have to have.

Mr. Riley said it's a deal at \$100 a year.

Mayor Kurtz said you get 4 plows, and you are going to get 4 plows.

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Councilperson Trakas said we used to have people that came to Council meetings and said it didn't snow this year, and I want my dollar back. Mayor Kurtz was always the first guy to give them the dollar out of his pocket.

Service Director McKinley asked are you serious?

Mayor Kurtz said yes.

Councilperson Trakas said they were very serious.

Mayor Kurtz asked so what's the rate we are going to charge? The question on the table was do we want to change it?

Councilperson Veverka asked do we have time to change it?

Mayor Kurtz said the only thing is I would want it to be unanimous, that way no one gets any sidebar outside.

Councilperson Trakas asked what would we get if we increased it by double?

Councilperson Trakas asked so if we had \$35,000 would that help us?

Councilperson Narduzzi said you get 2 free pushes. So, right now you are getting one free push.

Councilperson Trakas said I would rather do it systematically.

Mayor Kurtz asked would you rather shock them with \$100, or would you just say this year it's \$50, and then we will review the situation next year.

Councilperson Trakas said I think we should do both. We should raise it and say we are going to review it and might come up with something different.

Mayor Kurtz said we could create the narrative for that.

Councilperson Trakas said everybody knows that the prices have gone up.

Mayor Kurtz said when they see the prices for the bid, that is evidence enough that this is not the same as it was in the past. We still have to rely on Mother Nature.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said just from the age of 60 to 65 there are 160 people in that age bracket. So, if you upped it to 66, you would be at 160 driveways.

Councilperson Trakas said what if you said people from 60 to 64 paid \$100, 65 and up paid \$50. You are starting to get people to realize there are processes with this, and as we look at the program in the future, we might have some credibility to say hey look because of this, we are

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revamping the program, and you are paying a little bit more but you are also might be getting a little bit more.

Mayor Kurtz said I don't disagree with the concept.

Mr. Riley said the other option is you raise the age, and they don't get it.

Councilperson Narduzzi said I think you will get people to drop off if you raise the price.

Councilperson Trakas said particularly the younger people.

Councilperson Narduzzi said for \$50 I will go do it myself right? I wouldn't say that.

Mayor Kurtz said for \$100, they get 4 pushes, and after that they are free. I am going to pay the \$100.

Councilperson Narduzzi said you are, but not everybody will.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said all of us can agree to raise it to \$50, and if you want to look at from 60 to 64, it would be \$75 or \$100, I don't care; but we all have to be on the same page.

Councilperson Veverka said I have no problem with that if you deal with HEAP for those handful of people that it's a problem for. Does that make sense?

Councilperson Narduzzi said I agree 100%.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said I absolutely agree with that.

Councilperson Togliatti said so we have been through a couple of years of Covid, and our inflationary period, and our labor shortages, and I don't believe we have increased the prices of any of our City programs, Recreation, anything. Now we are looking at raising it for the seniors which is a concern for me, and this is a pretty clear cut program because we know the cost, we know what we are paying for.

Councilperson Narduzzi said we don't know the cost.

Councilperson Togliatti said when it's all said and done, we do.

Councilperson Narduzzi said we don't know what the cost is.

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Councilperson Togliatti said but we have a lot of other programs that are more complex than this with a lot of labor costs, a lot of surprise that are much more difficult to break down our City costs. I think wholistically we should look at everything and do an adjustment to everything and not just single out one individual program. That's my personal opinion. You are going to get a lot of pushback. You are going to get a lot of calls, but it's understandable as the price of everything has gone up, but this would be the only program we increase the price on.

Community Services Director Thomas said we have increased the price on some of our Community Services programs over the last year, not double the price.

Councilperson Togliatti asked and why is it that those programs don't have to be legislated, but this has to be legislated?

Mayor Kurtz said we spend a lot of money on this one.

Councilperson Trakas said I think a lot of times Council had this tendency to put things in legislation, and it really didn't have to be legislated per se. The people kind of did that to make sure it would be ongoing. So, if I am Patty Woodrick, and I am not sure I am going to get re-elected, I want to make sure that this gets into the statute so they can never get rid of it. I think that was kind of a tradition. We don't tend to do that today. I don't think we have created new programs that are by statute like that, and that the price is set in statute. I agree with you, I think we should review these things pretty adequately and then see. Everything is subsidized by the way. No program stands alone. Nothing pays for itself around here. That is part of the benefit of living in Independence, but you are right. I would take them all out of statute, or put them all in statute. You have this hybrid system now, and we never know the true costs of the program.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked like now, what is the true senior age?

Community Services Director Thomas said 60.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said my dad is 71 and still working. There are still people that are working that are very capable of paying for snowplowing. If you look at the numbers between the ages of 70 and 100, there are 512 residents that are getting snowplowing. The rest is from 60 to 69, and it's 278.

Mayor Kurtz asked how many of those are working?

Councilperson Walchanowicz said up to 70, I wonder how many are still working.

Mr. Riley said a lot of them retired when Covid hit.

Mayor Kurtz said these are all good ideas about tiers and everything else. In the spring we are going to do a comprehensive review, and we all will be able to articulate how it can better, how much it costs and everything. The money that we are paying this year, the prices are like wow,

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but in reality they are not. For \$25 a push is not a big deal today. It's real. So, we have to get ourselves acclimated to the new normal.

Councilperson Trakas said I would be willing to go up if you want to do \$50, and I completely appreciate where you are coming from.

Community Services Director Thomas said we can have that comprehensive review of our program costs.

Mayor Kurtz said so just to expedite this, we are going to change route, do it internally. Dirt Works will take on one of the other routes, correct? We will re-bid those, and so then we will be able to fill those slots. Are we making it a flat \$50? Then we could put a narrative out that we will be reviewing it at the end of the year because we will know the real costs and how much the exposure is. We will look at some of the ways we are going to modify it, and then make those changes per push using this template. I guess I want to know. Council, one, two, three, four, five, six, are we okay with that for this year?

Councilperson Togliatti said I would like to see a comprehensive review of all the programs and escalation in price across the board rather than just singling out a single one.

Mayor Kurtz said the rest of them we do periodically based on experience, programs. Some of the programs we start out we don't know the costs. We find new opportunities for people of all ages. It's like the food we serve the seniors. We started out at \$3 and then it went to \$5, and it still is a good program. We create these things and then watch them evolve. So, we depend on the leadership to help us facilitate our costs, the effectiveness of the program, the efficiency of the program and how we want to go forward with the program or drop the program. It's always one of these things that are moving around. This is not something that moves around. The only thing that moves around is total cost. We don't know that until the end of the season.

Councilperson Trakas asked to accommodate your request, do you just want to say that in a subsequent Council session we will evaluate all of our process to be fair? Does that bring you on board?

Councilperson Togliatti said that is something that we should do, yes.

Councilperson Trakas asked do you agree with that?

Mayor Kurtz asked what's that?

Councilperson Trakas said that at a subsequent meeting not too far in the future, we will evaluate all these by ordinance and otherwise and take a look at the costs and see if they need to change or not, all the other programs?

Mayor Kurtz said well confined to the parameters of that request. How far is the blossom going to go?

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Councilperson Togliatti said well the cost of everything is going up, all materials and all labor, so anything that we charge for.

Councilperson Trakas asked so Community Services and Rec type programs basically?

Councilperson Togliatti said so we talked about the cemetery. I think there are far reaching tentacles in just about every department in the City.

Mayor Kurtz said the cemetery is something we are going to deal with as we hone in on the costs. We are going to have to determine what the graves would cost, open grave, what a columbarium wall slot is going to cost. We are putting that together so that Council can review it, have input and make a decision because the existing rates won't cover the costs. If we spend the money to put the road in, the columbarium wall in and put a pavilion type mausoleum in, then we have a lot more flexibility in how we deliver our services in terms of funerals. So, there is a long term strategy that has to be incorporated into that process.

I think most of these programs, as they go through Community Services or as they go through Streets & Sidewalks or Public Lands & Buildings, they usually evolve into a process where Council sees the costs of every program. So, I would prefer to have each committee that deals with certain programs have their review with that department. That way we are not confusing Service coming to Community Services. I think each committee manages under their own umbrella.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked Councilperson Togliatti, you are under Community Services right?

Councilperson Togliatti said I was just throwing it out there, I think we lose over \$1,000,000 a year operating the Civic Center, but we haven't changed our pass fee in 20 years.

Mayor Kurtz said right.

Councilperson Togliatti asked why?

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said I want to see Council vote for those things. It's not a problem, but with all due respect, so who are we kidding?

Councilperson Trakas said that's a fair point.

Mayor Kurtz said with all due respect, having been a Councilperson.

Councilperson DiGeronimo asked when as the last increase for the snowplow program? It had gone up, but what was the last increase?

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Community Services Director Thomas said 2014.

Councilperson Togliatti asked what was it from \$10 to \$25?

Service Director McKinley said that was 8 years ago.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said I am on board, but actually guys I have to run, but we will talk next week. As far as the price increase, if doubling it was uncomfortable this year, we could take it up to \$40, bump it up \$15 I think is reasonable, and I think there are going to be some step increases along the way, I am in favor it. I am in favor of probably increasing the age of participation. If we don't want to talk about that or make any changes right now, understand, and we can talk about that in the spring, but I think for the next 3 weeks we have to think of anybody with a plow and send them to Dennis.

Mayor Kurtz said thanks John. What did we agree to?

Councilperson Walchanowicz said take Route 22 in-house.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said Route 22 is in-house. I will see if Brian from Dirt Works can add another route, and then bid anything that is available. We will award what we have this coming Tuesday and see if I could get it out for bid on Sunday, which is probably the first day it could be published in the Plain Dealer.

Service Director McKinley said it should help cut the gap. We are still going to be short.

Mayor Kurtz asked is it going from \$25 to \$50?

Councilperson Togliatti said sounds like everybody is in favor of it.

Mayor Kurtz said well I just want it to be unanimous. It has to be unanimous.

Councilperson Narduzzi said we just keep costing the City money month after month. It's common sense. Don't worry about yourself, worry about the City. It's a big ticket, and it's a lot of money.

Councilperson Togliatti said I appreciate and understand and don't disagree with much of what you just said; but I think we should do it globally with all of our programs.

Councilperson Narduzzi said it's up to you. You are in charge of that committee, start doing it.

Councilperson Togliatti said it's not up to me, the rates and to adjust them.

Councilperson Narduzzi said you have to have the meeting.

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Councilperson Togliatti said the illustration with the loss operating the Recreation side of the Civic Center is pretty substantial.

Councilperson Togliatti said then bring it to Council's attention and give us all the information that comes out of your committee meeting.

Councilperson DiGeronimo asked Anthony is there any increase that you would entertain, even a \$10, or you just don't want any?

Councilperson Togliatti said my personal opinion in dealing with the residents would be to deal with an adjustment in the spring and have a comprehensive review and see how this season goes. If you making drastic changes right before you release the application.

Councilperson DiGeronimo said that was my thought. I think it would be more drastic if we were going to do a larger increase, it sounds like entertaining that in the spring, that might be more shocking to people. An incremental step might make more sense now before we have unveiled it, \$10, \$15 or \$20 just to set the stage. That would be my approach.

Mayor Kurtz said okay, we have a plan.

Councilperson Trakas said really good work everybody.

Mayor Kurtz said I think we put it in the brochure.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mr. Riley said something for you guys to consider at another meeting, you know we do the tents, and I don't know if anyone here has rented a tent from Community Services. He said besides the price of what we charge for the tent, it takes Ron how many guys, four guys, 16 hours a week when they are doing it. Here's my suggestion just to throw it out there.

Mayor Kurtz asked if it was legislated.

Councilperson Togliatti said it's legislated.

Mr. Riley said looking at a company that maybe would give us a price and do it, and that frees up 4 guys to do City work.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked what is our cost to do it because we rented a tent for Lauren's shower, and I think it was \$325. They brought the chairs, the tables, the tent, up and down.

Services Director McKinley said so Rec will take the order in, they will call us and put it on the list. Then 4 guys will go out and set the tent up. Tom comes and puts the tables and chairs up, and his guys come take the tables and chairs out. Then we go back and take the tent back down. So, it's a process.

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Councilperson Walchanowicz asked what's the cost?

Services Director McKinley said I have those numbers, I didn't bring them with me right now. We can't do it for \$325. Just the 4 guys alone, you are at \$25 an hour times 16 hours, it's \$1,600.

Mr. Riley said plus, those are 4 guys that aren't cutting grass or weeding or doing City work. It's a lot of time.

Councilperson Togliatti said it all costs money.

Councilperson Trakas said we subsidize a lot.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked anything else? There was nothing else.

**Moved by Trakas, seconded by Narduzzi, to adjourn the Council Workshop of September 8, 2022, at 4:39 p.m. Voice Vote: 6 yes/0 no; motion carried.**

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Debra J. Beal, Clerk of Council  
Minutes Unapproved at Time of Release 09/12/22

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