

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE  
COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING  
MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 27, 2021 AT 4:00 P.M.  
VIA ZOOM**

Present: Chairperson Kathleen Kapusta  
Councilperson Jim Trakas  
Councilperson Chris Walchanowicz

Also Present: Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz  
Vice Mayor Dave Grendel  
Councilperson Kenn Synek  
Finance Director Blaze  
Recreation Director Tom Walchanowicz  
Community Services Director Emily Thomas  
Community Resource Director Jennifer Zisk-Vitron  
Community Services Assistant Director Amber Veverka  
Clerk of Court Angie Zidanic

Chairperson Kapusta called the meeting to order at 4:12 p.m.

Chairperson Kapusta said sorry for the delay, it was kind of unavoidable. Our first agenda item today is the Drug Prevention Programming updates from Angie Zidanic.

Clerk of Court Zidanic said good afternoon everybody. Thank you Chairperson Kapusta. I would like to start off with some good news that Jess Crooks' group, the Youth Led Prevention Team called PEAT preventing emergencies among teens, is assembling to practice their presentation, and they are going to resume prior to the end of the first quarter at the middle school. Just to give you an idea, this group is trained to present the generation RX curriculum developed by Ohio State to prevent the misuse of prescription medications to sixth through ninth graders; and they also have a vaping presentation that they do at the middle school as well. During Covid they were unable to do this training, but they are practicing and planning to resume before the end of the first quarter.

Additionally, as you know, Mary Dolejs has retired and Kyle Kovach is the new high school guidance counselor. He is going to be in charge of a couple of the new programs at the high school under Jamie Hogue; and one of them is a follow up to what we know as the Rachel's Challenge Program. It's called Actively Caring for People, and that is also a student led group, and basically the students train others to maintain a positive school climate of acceptance and tolerance in removing stigmas of all kinds such as mental health, addiction and gender identity issues. So, Kyle is going to be in charge of that program as well.

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I also wanted to report that Principal Vanek at the middle school is planning an internet crimes against children task force presentation on October 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. So far, this is being planned as an in-person program. The presentation will cover all aspects of social media and is geared toward educating parents and guardians about potential online dangers. What is nice also about this program is that Principal Vanek was able to collect data from the Independence middle school students in regards to social media usage and length of screen time on cell phones, etc. So, he will be presenting that data to parents as well.

He has also created some guides for parents based on the apps that the students are using such as Tik Tok. It's a very popular app. He even suggested it's a good way to communicate with students is to use that app, but he is preparing guides for parents so that they can understand what their children are using.

Also, Campus Life is rolling right along this school year. They are working with building principals to pitch in during lunch hours and free periods. Both principals are requesting their presence on campus. It is very helpful to have the Campus Life folks there, and Campus Life is also planning to offer something almost every day after school this year. That is their goal. Maybe just a drop in program, something that is offered every day for students to be able to come to, maybe gearing it towards middle school boys one day, high school girls the next day; but they just want to be able to give students something to do every day if they would like to do that.

Lastly, I would like to present on the Prevention Specialist Alexa. Alexa's current caseload is 32 students. There are 30 who are continuing from last year, and 2 are new referrals from this year. The breakdown of her caseload is 2 students from the primary school, 13 students from the middle school and 17 students from the high school. The issues that they are dealing with again are responses to Covid and healthy coping strategies, suicide and impact, anxiety, depression, trauma, grief and loss, family and peer conflict, stress management and substance abuse. Also good news is Alexa is planning on resuming her staff training for the after school program folks. She was not able to do this during Covid, but she is going to resume that this year.

I would like to just mention too with Emily and Jen Vitron on board, I know it's a priority to get Jen connected with Alexa as they are both social workers and can share information in such a way that Jen will be able to maybe follow up with families that Alexa is seeing. I was really only able to interact if there was a court case involving a student, but in this instance with Jen being a licensed social worker I think she's going to be a great, great addition to the team, especially working with Alexa in the schools.

That's my report.

Chairperson Kapusta said thanks Angie. I just listen to when you were talking about, you gave the laundry list of what the school social worker is dealing with regarding the children, and it was a little bit overwhelming. The depth and the scope of the problems, it's really almost frightening to think that we have children, and even the number that you gave, dealing with that. How great it feels to know that we have several resources, she being one, for them available at the school, so thank you for that.

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Does anyone have any questions of Angie?

Finance Director Blaze said no questions, but if you want to take a comment from the peanut gallery. It's a positive one. You mentioned Campus Life, Angie, and just a testimonial about the impact that the program could have. You all know I coach cross country, and our practices are usually after school, but that's when Campus Life meets; and on Fridays I have started holding a second practice before school, mostly for students that are in the band. It makes their Friday afternoons a little less hectic so that they don't have to get a practice in and then get to band by a certain time. This past Friday a middle school boy showed up at my 5:50 a.m. practice, and I am like what are you doing here, you don't have a game tonight because he's in the band too. Your game is tomorrow night. He goes well if I go to practice now, I am able to go to Campus Life after school today, and that speaks volumes to me that a 12 or 13 year old boy would get up at 5:30 in the morning to go run in the dark so that he could go to Campus Life after school.

Chairperson Kapusta said that is a great testimonial Vern, yes. Thank you for sharing that.

Clerk of Court Zidanic said thanks Vern.

Chairperson Kapusta asked anyone else have any questions or comments to Angie? Hearing none, Angie thank you again as always a very comprehensive report, and it helps us to stay in the loop with the many programs that we have ongoing through our school district for our youth and those that our City is involved in as well. Thank you very much.

Clerk of Court Zidanic said and thank you for the opportunity.

Chairperson Kapusta said we will move on then to Community Services Department. Emily, the first item on the agenda we have is the roles of the Community Services Director and the Social Worker.

Several people began speaking at once.

Councilperson Trakas said we wanted to get your views on that.

Community Services Director Thomas said well I'm into almost month two here. I'm very excited to be here. It's been a very positive experience, really my first time working in Independence was Home Days. I helped out Dar a little bit to just get the lay of the land before I started; and so really the first two months has been spent listening, learning and understanding. I don't think it's fair for me to make recommendations or assumptions at a place that I haven't been yet; so getting to know the team, beginning to make that decision process and really just wanted to share that we at Community Services Department operate effectively and efficiently while certainly meeting the ever changing needs of our community, especially in the midst of a pandemic. We don't know what the next days are going to hold, so right now we are going through the process of (inaudible) our programs and events, seeing where there might be some gaps that we need to address from a community perspective and also working in cooperation with the schools, the school social worker, different community partners as well just to make sure that we are addressing the holistic community. I will let Jen elaborate, but really just with

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her background and knowledge and understanding, just really kind of expanding the social worker position to that true community resource. So, we are talking about potentially birth to senior and addressing all of those needs. I will let Jen share a little about what we talked about so far, but that's what we are going to do.

Chairperson Kapusta said thanks Emily.

Community Resource Director Jen Vitron said hello everybody. This is my second week. I worked part-time last week, and I will be part-time this week, starting full-time next week. So, some of the things that Emily and I have talked a little bit about is expanding our Community Resource list for our residents. We have started talking about how we can work in some mental health programming into our existing programming but creating some new things that are meeting the needs of the residents across their life cycle.

So, it's been really nice to transition in on a part-time manner. Everybody over at Community Services is wonderful. Amber has been wonderful too just teaching me the ropes, and I have had an opportunity to meet with some of the residents who have been interested in speaking with a social worker and am looking forward to meeting more of the residents as they come to the Civic Center and then working with Emily and Amber on some programming.

Chairperson Kapusta said well welcome to both of you. Jen, if I could ask, could you expand a little bit on what you were referring to with the Community Resources list?

Community Resource Director Vitron said so it's my understanding that there is an existing Community Resource list that is available to the residents, but it needs to be updated. It's taking a look at that and looking at how I can add some resources to that. I am interested in connecting with our residents of all ages to find out exactly what some of the needs are, and also talking to our front desk staff to understand what it is that they are getting requests for so that we can make sure there are resources that meet all of the needs of our residents.

Chairperson Kapusta asked are those like service providers Jen?

Community Resource Director Vitron said yes.

Chairperson Kapusta said I strongly support that. We did have a very active one in the past, and it's very helpful to all of our population I think but particularly to our seniors when they know that there's somebody who maybe a friend or neighbor has used that service provider or person. Another thing that we have done in the past that you might want to consider is we have put something in our community newsletter asking our own residents if they provide any of these services, if they are roofers, if they do gutter work, if they would like to be listed in that. That again is kind of a reassuring thing for any of our residents when they say oh it's somebody who lives in town. It's kind of like when you open up your church bulletin and you find the names on the back there; somehow you just feel that's going to be a little bit better for you. That's great. I am glad to hear that.

Anyone else have any questions or comments for either Emily or Jennifer?

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Councilperson Trakas said a couple of quick things. On the Community Resource list when you say, these are vendors that people use, is that what you are referring to? Is there any type of specific genre or is this general? Is it social services? Is it around the house type of thing?

Community Services Director Thomas said so it's a little bit general, it just hasn't been updated in some time. So, the goal would be to provide a variety of services. For example, we had somebody call about their mother is struggling with Alzheimer's and wanted to get resources. So, we are not going to be the be all end of it and say okay just let me help you with that; but we would be referring her to the Alzheimer's Association or x,y,z.

We are really kind of providing a comprehensive piece. If anybody would need childcare during the day, and we don't offer during the day, so just kind of a comprehensive list of services and options for our residents. I think we have a baseline from what the previous list was, but also as we get those phone calls and Jen talks to our people, just adding them and also building that out, almost like concierge services if you will; so that way if somebody called the front desk and Jen is leaving, we don't have to say we will forward it to Jen's voicemail and she would call them back. We can turn to that page in the Community Resource guide and actually refer; and here's a list, do you want me to email to you, can I make a copy? What does that look like?

Councilperson Trakas said so to follow up with that, I think that if you publish this and put it on our website and update it on a regular basis, then you can solicit more people to be involved. There are a lot of talented people in town, and people don't know about them.

I can also see in the future, and this is not a discussion for today, I would like to see us even work through our Purchasing Department to put a price list and say hey look if you want to be on our list as you cut people's grass, it's \$20 or whatever. This is what the price looks like, and so we might be able to (inaudible) to leverage our resources to help them for these types of products. I love this idea, and I hope that we might have a conversation about this.

Community Services Director Thomas said that's really good. It's really one of the priorities of Jen and I along with Mayor, to (inaudible) that Resource list once she gets acclimated. We can also find out what the school is doing and also how we can make mental wellness something the kids want to engage with and their parents want to engage with and seniors want to engage with because there's definitely some stigma around that.

Councilperson Trakas said perfect.

Chairperson Kapusta said thank you Councilperson Trakas too. Any other questions or comments?

Councilperson Trakas said I just have one more. I'm just curious if there's something you would like to bring that you thought might be helpful for the position. Obviously, you have the basic competencies down, but what is your vision for this position? Not that we are putting you on the spot here? What is it that you think would be most valuable? What would you like to see accomplished?

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Community Services Director Thomas said to be frank, in the interview process, this is a very different world. So, I came from the sports side, community relations; so it's similar in nature, but also very different in some respects. From the get go, I was going to listen and learn and ask a lot of questions. So, right now it's really about looking (inaudible). So, really I have been diving into our current state of our programs, and we do a lot of really great things; so if we didn't change anything, we would still be doing well. It's how you do better by 1% every day; we get a little bit better. Some things as simple as after school care, so little things like that. Also, kind of evaluating what are the needs. Right now we don't offer a mental health program, so that's why that's priority number 1A; but also things like we have a lot of K-4 programming, that's great; but we are really kind of missing that for those older kids like 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>. Once you get to 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, you have your own activities and your friend group, you might be able to stay home by yourself; and so for example in November we are going to launch a middle school edition Fantastic Fridays, and that will get the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders to come in and help us build that program for them, what they want to do. Just little things like that along the way; and again being we are in the pandemic and not knowing what regulations are going to change, that might change too quickly that we can't sustain and have to go back to all virtual programming, things of that nature.

So, I think you will see probably at the next committee meeting working on that because I think it's really important before I go to Council or the Mayor and say hey this is what I want. I have one-on-ones with different members of the team every single week before I share anything. That doesn't mean that we always have to agree on everything. I am going to challenge my team to be that 1% better and work together as a team. So, that's what I want.

Chairperson Kapusta said thank you. Anyone else?

Thank you both for your comments. It was very informative.

We will move on to the next item which is a review of fall programs and events to date, and I know this will come up again when we go into the Recreation Department; and I just wanted to say that having had the opportunity to be at the Fall Fest yesterday, wow what a great job. I haven't seen so many smiling faces in such a long time, it was a pleasure to see; so thank you and all of your staffs for the hard work you did for that. Take it away.

Community Services Director Thomas said I have a (inaudible), but because we are using my computer, I won't switch it over; but I will make sure that the committee and everybody gets that.

I keep saying this in the midst of a pandemic, we really are moving forward. Our tot room is open. We have before school, after school, school holiday care going on today, and all the activities. We have Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday lunches back in the building, just really kind of all of our programming. We accomplished Home Days in quarter three, Fall Fest was successful. We have already been brainstorming and thinking about next year. Again, making us a little bit better than it was this past year, and so I think our whole team is really proud of what we have accomplished. I started in quarter three, Jen started in quarter three; so we are really just kind of getting started in my opinion and trying to get all back together, but I am

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proud to say that all of our programs have resumed. We are getting people back in the building, people are feeling more comfortable. We are getting positive feedback from people, and that's where we are at right now.

Chairperson Kapusta said thank you. Any questions or comments?

Then we will do the planned winter programs and events overview Emily.

Community Services Director Thomas said in addition to kind of all of our ongoing programming, there's a number of things that are coming up. So, obviously our team has a huge part in tree lighting. We have senior salsa that we are trying out for the first time as well. Senior salsa is just to try to engage residents in a different way.

Councilperson Trakas said senior knee blowout.

Community Services Director Thomas said that's why everybody signs waivers. We have Yuletide, Adopt a Family. Our Funtastic Fridays are coming back. The middle school edition launches that first Friday in November.

Creepy Cottages is coming up in October. That is sold out. Last month it was in the Spotlight because we had such a great response to that.

Gingerbread Houses is coming up, getting ready to promote that as well; but just a lot of great things on the horizon that I think you will see more come from us. So, again that kind of full width and depth of that.

Chairperson Kapusta said that's good. I am looking forward to all of those programs. The Yuletide one I think is going to be a little challenged this year because losing Amy Washabaugh from Broadview Heights as the director; she was a fireball for that program, and she really took things forward. So, there's going to need to be a lot of energy to make up for Amy I will tell you.

Community Services Director Thomas said it is. I had a chance to meet her once, and I hope to have the chance to see her again because I think her last day is the 8<sup>th</sup>. I think she will be at one more meeting that we have virtually, but I think we are going to need to be a little bit creative in how we present that opportunity for our residents to support both the Adopt a Family and Yuletide; so I think that you will be excited about those things.

Chairperson Kapusta said I think it's always great when we utilize our activities that we provide like Fall Fest yesterday to encourage our residents to consider donations of both the food and the money because I think people are usually willing to do that, but we just need to keep reminding them. I don't think it's inappropriate especially when we have a lot of those programs helping our own residents as well as area residents, and I think people are just needing to be reminded to do that. So, thank you for continuing that as well.

How about discussion on the age to be considered a senior resident.

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Community Services Director Thomas said so this is something that we, Amber the Assistant Director, myself and Tom have been talking about. There is just a little bit of inconsistency in how we define a senior in our community programs. So, the Rec you have to be 60 years old to be considered a senior. For snow plowing it's also 60 years old, but some of our programs we run 55 plus; and so what we have heard from residents is that if you are 55, you don't necessarily feel the same age as somebody who is the 60 or plus category, things of that nature. So, we just wanted to rethink how we promote our senior programs holistically; but also to be consistent across the board. That's really important; so with the committee's support I just wanted to move forward and say 60 plus across the board as just considered a senior; but (inaudible) because I had a resident come into my office and say I'm 68 but by going to this lunch I feel old, and that's not what we want. We have a huge group of active seniors in our community, but just from a consistency and programmatic standpoint I just want to define it as 60 plus, the same age you get an Ohio Buckeye Card and things of that nature. I think that will help us to kind of market to a different population of currently the seniors who are in the 55 plus category, but making sure that we recognize them as the active adults that they are.

Chairperson Kapusta asked Emily besides when we call it 55 plus programming, do we really have anything else in the way of services that we target to that lower age market? I don't think so, do we?

Community Services Director Thomas said so the slightly lower age we have 55 plus lunches, our senior salsa started at 55 plus as well as some of those activities that we have designated for seniors are all part of the 55 plus, and then the last piece would be the Vista Springs live cooking demonstration is also promoted as 55 plus. They do obviously want to target the senior community, but they would have no problem with like having the age start at 60 plus.

Chairperson Kapusta asked do you have any statistics showing what number of our residents who are attending these things are actually in that segment of 55 to 60?

Community Services Director Thomas said so I don't have any official data, but we spoke about it this morning and kind of identified as a type of conversation is that it's very minimal if there are any seniors that are in that 55 to 59 age range who attend these programs.

Chairperson Kapusta said that's kind of what I would have surmised too, but I was wondering. What other discussion do we have on this? Any other members have any comments or thoughts on this?

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked have we asked any other communities what their senior age starts at?

Community Services Director Thomas said we have not directly asked any other communities, but you see it varies. For Silver Sneakers it's 65. It varies from program to program, and so like I said, we just felt, Amber, Tom and I thought just to have consistency across the board was important; and that way too it's not as much of a jump if we would change like senior plowing from 60 to 65. I am sure we will have some residents that come out as to Kathleen's question earlier, people in that 55 to 59 age range coming to those programs that we market as 55 plus.

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Councilperson Trakas said it's almost like retirement age. You consider 62 to 65 as retirement age.

Several people began speaking at once.

Councilperson Trakas said I don't have any problems doing that. The 55 lunches, I think we said there was like 18 to 20 people who were supposed to be under 60. It was back in the summer when we were talking about eligibility. So, we did have like maybe 10% of the people were under 60; so that would have an impact on them, but obviously we were doing it during the pandemic as opposed to now.

Community Services Director Thomas said and I will say obviously the most important thing is that we provide a service to our residents; so if there is a resident that comes to any (inaudible) and we have it designated as 60 plus, and they are 57, we don't want to stop them. We just want to have the flexibility there as well.

Chairperson Kapusta said it seems like there's consensus from us that we think that it's a good way to move, and certainly it's also reflective of what's happening in society in general as people are working longer typically and living longer. So, we are kind of pushing that upper age up as Vice Mayor Grendel said he wants to make it 70. Thank you, that sounds great.

Any other comments or questions for Emily or Jen? Thank you very much. Then we will move on to the Recreation Department.

Recreation Director Tom Walchanowicz said we put together a little Power Point and hopefully it's going to work if Debi could screen share.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said we are just summarizing the summer season. If you remember last year obviously had some really tight regulations, and we were going back and forth, we didn't even know if we were opening the pool. Well this year we basically got back to somewhat normal operations. The only thing that we really kept in check was the amount of non-residents that a resident could bring in. We kept that to one non-resident per resident, and it seemed to work fairly well. There were a couple of times when we were a little short on staff and we were getting close to maximum capacity; but I would say 95% of the time we were able to accommodate everyone that wanted to come into the pool.

As you can see, 2020 attendance we were at a little bit over 11,000, and 2021 we were a little bit over 20,000. So, a big difference from last year; and obviously we had a nice, for the most part, warm summer, a little bit more rain than normal. The pool was really full, almost every day it was the place to be.

We did have the day camp, the summer playground and the star camp this year.

We did have the swim meets return. Some cities didn't opt to go with the swim team so we only had 4 in our league this year. We normally have around 8 or 9. So, we did also host the

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championship swim meet which was the Saturday before Home Days, and that worked out very well.

Again, the big issue we had this summer was the staffing. We basically worked with 30% less staffing this year which was tough at times to do. A lot of the seasoned guards had to work a lot more and the same with the maintenance. The help just wasn't there, but we made due and it turned out to be a fairly good season.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked Tom, do you recall what the attendance was back in 2019 pre-pandemic, was it greater than 20,398?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said you know I think it was a little bit. I think we were at around 23,000 if I remember right. So, it was a little bit shy of 2019, yes.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked what do you think the reason for the lower applicants to work as lifeguards?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said well it was a number of things. We are not getting the applicants like we used to. We didn't have a lifeguard training class last year at all because we really couldn't with the Covid restrictions; so that we lost probably 15 because each year we have a class we get 15 new guards. So, from last year we were down 15 just because we didn't have a class.

Chairperson Kapusta said Tom, I was going to ask you that about the class. When you do have that, do we typically only see or primarily see young people from Independence coming into the class or is it from surrounding areas that you train? How does that work?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said it's surrounding communities, Independence and surrounding communities, but mostly Independence residents.

Chairperson Kapusta asked do we ever get any of those who come in from other communities to work for us?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said sometimes, but like Brecksville this past year opened up a new facility; so they tripled their lifeguarding staff out there. So, they got a lot of kids from Broadview Heights, Nordonia area, Richfield; they absorbed a good amount of available staff out there.

This was a common thing across all pools. April goes to these roundtable meetings with surrounding aquatic directors, and everybody was just starving for lifeguards. Then everybody is contributing it to no one having classes last year, lifeguarding classes.

Chairperson Kapusta said there could also be some who just didn't feel they wanted to be in that person-to-person contact area. That would make sense too.

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I know you are always on top of this Tom, but do we remain competitive from a salary perspective for our lifeguards?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said well basically we do. We did increase things a little bit this year, we didn't go extreme. I think we started, it was \$10.00 an hour that we started most of our summer staff; but we did increase it a little bit. That did help, but I hate to say that's another thing; you can go to McDonald's or Wendy's and make \$13.00 to \$14.00 an hour now. It's kind of amazing.

Any other questions on the outdoor pool operations at all? There were none.

I will move on, so Linda is going to talk about this because Linda kind of spearheaded this, and it was our new summer fitness club. The cross country coach started this last year as more of a running club, and he gave us the idea and had a bunch of suggestions and we wanted to take this and run literally. Linda was the spearhead of this, and she really turned this into a really nice club. I was there for a few of the instructions, and it was a really fun class. Linda, do you want to speak?

Linda Farace said hi everybody. With the cross country coach Blaze and his vision and his assistance through this whole thing, we were able to establish this summer fitness club which again was the expansion of his runners' club to not only include running but an overall fitness experience for grades 1 through 12. This club was a collaboration of the Indy Fit fitness professionals, college athletes, as well as recent graduates from Independence High School. As you can see by the little video, we had music and just lots of fun. It went for 7 weeks, and we had a total of 150 kids actually sign up for the club. We made it so that they didn't have to come every day; so if they were in something else and it conflicted, they could just join in when they could and didn't miss out on anything. It was a lot of fun.

Chairperson Kapusta said that's a great enrollment.

Linda Farace replied yes. So, I think we will do it again next year.

Chairperson Kapusta said sounds like we should.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked how many days a week, was it offered every day of the week?

Linda Farace said for the first 3 weeks it was 3 days a week, and then for the last 4 weeks we went to 4 days a week.

Chairperson Kapusta said I see too about the transportation back to the summer camp and summer playground, that was quite an enhancement for those young people.

Linda Farace said yes, the parents liked that a lot.

Chairperson Kapusta said good work.

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Recreation Director Walchanowicz said and we were able to utilize the turf football field, the school was very accommodating to us. It's amazing how many different activities are going on with that turf field now between off season football, training and practices, the soccer teams. There seemed like there were so many activities.

Linda Farace said we had college athletes who were coming out there and practicing on their own. It was very well utilized.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said that was real nice of the school to let us use that facility.

Moving on here, ICAN, as you remember back last year ICAN basically took a total step back just with most of the ICAN members who have rough immune systems, and everybody was very cautious. So, last year we didn't do basically any ICAN programs, but this year Jim Wotowiec really turned up the heat, and everything was outdoors. We still kept everything outdoors, but he had over 60 events held this summer, and just a few here I listed from yoga to the adaptive with the dance studio. The Friday Night Walkers' Club, that continues to be a big thing, and then he had bingo in the park with the Up Side of Downs. We were also working with the Indy Fit workouts, we had them at the Elmwood Rec and usually these are held outside; but again Jim really did a nice job. We got back into some normal routines, and they were all happy because it's like a family. They were all happy to get back together and be with one another and very happy the way that went this past summer.

We did have one small Cavs event over at the Fieldhouse. It was a 3 day camp, and they kept their participation down because they didn't want to have too many people inside of a building at one time. So, it was about half what we would normally have, but again it was something. It was another nice thing that worked out for everyone.

Our little league season this past year, we had 433 and 71 in our kick start t-ball program. Both of those numbers are up from 2019, I am happy to say. So, everybody was itching to get back on the baseball fields, and again Claudia Duhan, I have to take my hat off to her, she does a marvelous job. She heads up the kick start program. She does that with us because it's a good relationship that she has with all these younger families from all of her Friday night activities that she has with the younger kids; and they all really love her. The word of mouth when they hear that she is doing a program, the attendance just goes through the ceiling. Again, she heads this up along with some of our other part-time staff. We have concession girls that are softball players. We have some of our boys in the park that are baseball players; so everybody kind of helps out with this program across the board here between the staffs and also the after school program and summer camp, there's a couple of baseball players that would help out with this too. It was a real nice program. Again, you can see 71 people, and that number just keeps going up every year for that kick start t-ball program.

Councilperson Trakas asked those are residents?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said that's all residents Jim, absolutely. In the little league we do take St. Michael kids, even though they aren't residents; but they have to go to St. Michael school. We have had that kind of for years. So, if you go to St. Michael, you can also join.

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Chairperson Kapusta said Tom I would just add to your comments about Claudia. When we first brought her on with the City, I had been encouraging her for a long time to consider this because I have known her for 35 years, and I used to say to her, you could say here's a bean, make a whole program about a bean; and she would. She's extremely creative, and she loves working with the little ones, and that shows so I appreciate your comments.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said yes, the passion there that she has is just unbelievable. We are very fortunate to have her on staff.

Chairperson Kapusta said yes, I agree.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said the next screen just shows some numbers. We did have an Indians camp again this year. In 2020 we did not. We actually had 2 Indians camps, one was a 3 day camp, the other was the regular week camp. Their numbers were down, though I will say compared to what they normally were, their numbers were down. Again, I think parents were still a little bit apprehensive about getting kids all together.

Swimming lessons, we had 234; we went back to normal group type lessons this past summer. Our summer swim team, we had 60; and then again there are some numbers for the ICAN program.

That's going to be the last slide on programs. I am going to go into some capital. If anybody has any questions on anything with programs or summer operations at this point.

Chairperson Kapusta said no.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said I will switch gears here to the splash pad updates. Again, like most other companies, everything kind of drags on a little bit. We were hoping to have this kind of started after the pool closed; but we are close, but we are not right there yet. You will see, this will be on the October Council agenda. So, we have Raindrop Products. They are Sourcewell approved company, and they are an Ohio company right here in Mansfield; so all of the products, if this is approved, are going to be made right here in Mansfield, Ohio. I am going to try and get this video to work if I can here.

It's amazing what computer generated animation can do, but this is basically an idea of what it's going to be and what it is going to look like. I know Mr. Grendel you are going to probably be out there with your grandkids at some point here.

Councilperson Trakas asked now where is this going to be Tom?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said it's going to be north of the activity pool between the sidewalk entrance and the fence. I know it does show a little bit more greenspace around here; it's going to be a little bit tighter than what these pictures show. It's still is going to fit in there well, and the reason, I am going to show you if I can get to it.

Councilperson Trakas asked how deep is that?

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Recreation Director Walchanowicz said it's zero depth, so it doesn't have to be lifeguarded; that's what is nice about it. We won't have to increase our staffing because by State code you don't need a lifeguard.

Chairperson Kapusta asked didn't you say to us at one time Tom too that even when there's times when the pool would be closed, you could have that open?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz replied correct.

The way we are envisioning this is that when the pool is operating, this gate will be closed during when the pool is open in the summer. In order to get into this splash pad, you have to go through the main pool entrance and through this set of gates. Now let's say like today for example, the outdoor pool is closed, but today was 83 degrees. We could have this splash pad open by opening this gate, and this will be controlled with a swipe reader so that you would need a Civic Center or an outdoor pool pass to gain access to this. This gate will be closed. So, all that you will be accessible to is this splash pad area.

Chairperson Kapusta said I like that, versatility and the fact that it is still usable Tom when the pool would be closed. That is great.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said correct, and we have the restroom facilities here, the water line is here, the sanitary sewer is all within reach; so that's why we picked this area as the best location. The sidewalk, again there's probably not going to be greenspace right on this side, the sidewalk will just be bumped out a little bit and will go right back to where the drop off area would be. The walkway into the pool will all be the same.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked Tom, will there be any supervisory people while the splash pad is operational?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said that's all to be determined. At this point, they say it should operate without anybody around.

Vice Mayor Grendel said anybody tampering with it or any kind of property damage is what I'm worried about.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said the thing is where this is located, cars are constantly driving past. The road is out towards this area; so I mean for the most part it shouldn't be. The swipe access will only be active during certain hours. You can only get in here between 11:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. It will all be fenced in just like the pool is; so you wouldn't be able to access that, only during those hours.

Chairperson Kapusta said so hopefully you have some accountability based on the visibility, and the fact that you have to swipe in with your identifying information. So, people might be a little bit deterred from doing any damage I would hope.

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Recreation Director Walchanowicz said by the time this opens, we should have the cameras in the park operational; and I am sure that this is going to be a prime area that we are going to have cameras. That will be an extra set of eyes for us because right now our front desk employees monitor our playground area; and that's really been very successful here.

Chairperson Kapusta said it might not be a bad idea Tom when it does open too that maybe as you are rolling everything out and explaining all the rules and times and everything that you say from the perspective of your enhanced safety understand that there's good visibility from the road, that we have camera access, that you are swiping in; so hopefully as we are trying to encourage people to not be making any potential abuse of it, they will also be realizing that there's some safety factors in place. So, I think that will be really helpful.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said sure, correct. Thank you, absolutely.

Councilperson Trakas asked how tall is the fence going to be Tom?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said 6 foot, just like we have down there down Jim. It's a 6 foot aluminum fence.

Councilperson Trakas said that's good.

Finance Director Blaze said and Tom the surface that you and April and your team decided to go with the individual matted tile blocks instead of a one system where they would pour it; but it will be a soft surface correct? It won't be just concrete?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz replied yes, and when I present it to Council, we can paint the surface on, it's cheaper. If you go with the tiles, the tiles are the absolute best way to go, but it is pricey. I am going to explain that, but the tile surface is the absolute best way to go. I will explain all of that.

Any other questions with the splash pad?

Chairperson Kapusta said thanks for sharing that.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said moving on here then. Giving an update on our weight strength equipment replacement at the Civic Center, I am happy to say that we have an install date. It's going to be installed between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of October. We are going to have to close the upstairs of the building for those few days. Currently we have the current machines on Govdeals, and I am happy to report that we do have, the bids are going to close on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and currently we have a bid of \$3,900 for the old equipment. Again, they have to remove the equipment; so that's going to be on them and not us. We have a 2 day window when we put this on Govdeals, we put a stipulation on that it has to be removed during these 2 days. So, we are trying to keep that closing of that upstairs to a minimum. So, we are looking at again between October 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, the removal and the install.

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Moving on here, the indoor pool maintenance; we shut down the indoor pool this past summer. We had a company come in from Pittsburgh. They are metal engineers because we have been having some issues with these little white things here which are called anodes; and they are like type of a metal is supposed to corrode instead of the stainless steel. Well, for the past couple of years we have been noticing a lot more staining and sediment from these anodes; and they have been really corroding quickly. So, that's why we had this engineering firm come in from Pittsburgh, and they did all kinds of testing on this pool while we were in this shutdown. They came to the conclusion that the anodes, the original company we were buying these anodes from back when the pool was built went out of business so we were buying them from another company. The metal that these are made up of was not the exact metal that they should have been. So, now we have a special recipe of a magnesium alloy that these anodes are supposed to be; so we are in the process of getting them made from another company, the exact specifications that this company recommends. It did no damage to the pool. All the welds are intact, all the integrity of the pool is still there, and that's what we were a little worried about because this pool is a little bit over 30 years old, it was put in 1991. So, we were a little worried about that, but they assured us that the welds and the integrity of the stainless steel is all there; and what the issue was is that this odd metal that they have here, it's more of a zinc based, it was causing a lot of staining on our pool and these things were deteriorating a lot faster than what they should.

Chairperson Kapusta said Tom when you said the pool has been there since 1991, it just makes for pause; you and your department do an amazing job in keeping it up-to-date and keeping it modernized. I don't think anybody could look at that pool and realize that it's that age.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said I know, it's hard to believe. Then after they did all of their testing, Tech Services came in and gave the floor a new coat of paint. So, that should last now for about 5 years.

Moving on here to our next project that we have going, it's the Elmwood Rec floor; and I am happy to report that I finally have a date; and they will be starting next Monday, October 4<sup>th</sup>. Again, it's Cincinnati Flooring Company that's doing this, an out of town company is going to be here. It's going to be a 2 to 3 week project. They feel confident that they should have it done by the end of the 3 weeks.

Community Services Director Thomas said and Tom I will just add that Cincinnati Floors, we worked with them with the Cavs to do all of the renovations to the basketball courts that we did, the Community Relations team. I cannot say enough great things about them and just the quality of their work and their timeliness. I really liked that.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said good to hear. Again, a similar floor that's at the Fieldhouse, and that floor has held up very well over these years. Cincinnati Floors is a very good company. Like everybody else, they are having employee issues, and that's why it's a little bit behind. We wanted to get it a little bit sooner, but there again, they are coming in next week so we should get this done fairly quickly.

Just giving an update on our golf carts, our 2 new golf carts were supposed to be delivered in June; and unfortunately they are still not here. The good thing is this company, we do still have

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the loaner golf carts, and they are really nice golf carts that we have; but they are gasoline. The company did give us these 2 nice loaner golf carts. The last I heard, it was another 2 weeks. So, that is what we are looking at. That's again, our supply chain issues that we are having in this country.

To give another update on the bocce ball courts, I am going to hopefully have this on the November Council agenda, I have been working with Norm Casini on some final layouts. I am going to have another meeting with the bocce ball players here in another few weeks, and then we should be getting this on the November meeting. I am hoping that we are going to do this during the off season winter months and the early spring.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked Tom, will there be a roof on the bocce ball courts?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said that's what we are looking at, yes. Now I have a couple of people that kind of don't want a roof, but it seems like the majority want the roof. I have 2 people that really don't want a roof, but we have been talking about a roof for years back when Mr. Grande I remember back about 15 years ago asking for a roof. It might even be more than 15 years ago they have been asking for a roof over that so they can play when it's raining; so we are looking at that route yes.

Chairperson Kapusta said I think you had mentioned Tom also that the areas, the sides were going to be lower so that people didn't have to be maybe as dexterous.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said correct. It's going to be about a 6 to 8 inch curve all around it, and we are going to add more benches around it to compensate because I know people sit on the walls now of the bocce ball courts. There will be more benches all around it and more sidewalk. We will have handicap access. Right now you have to walk through grass to get to them so it will be a lot more user-friendly for everyone.

Chairperson Kapusta said that will be good. There were many times where it almost looked like we would have somebody going down because of those sides; so that's excellent.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said I just want to say that we are going to, as soon as we get our staffing level back here, we are going to have weekdays, we are going to be opened until 9:00 p.m., Saturdays until 6:00 p.m., Sundays 3:00 p.m. We (inaudible) open the Fieldhouse, right now we have the mornings 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. We will begin evening hours in October, and we will begin weekend hours in November. As soon as the weather starts going south, we are going to just switch gears and make sure people have an area to walk. That's a big thing, people have really been walking a lot. If you go around the park at all, whether it's early mornings or mid-afternoon, late at night, there are people walking this park like I have never seen before. They are walking dogs, jogging; it's unbelievable how our paths are getting used here.

The last thing I just want to say is that going forward with the survey and everything that we had and with the coaches that we have from the travel to the high school coaches, the consensus is that they don't like when the Fieldhouse is booked up for solid weekends; so we are going to go

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down the avenue of having no large events on the weekends unless it's a school sponsored event such as the wrestling tournament. We aren't going to rent to the outside profit groups such as the big basketball tournaments. We have the high school softball and the Emerald Necklace softball teams that are planning a partnership with us to have softball clinics and baseball clinics on the weekend. You may not see the amount of numbers of people using the Fieldhouse, but you will see a whole lot more residents using the Fieldhouse. So, I just wanted to put that out there. I think we will be making a lot of residents happy by going down this avenue.

Chairperson Kapusta said great.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked how much revenue was generated by those tournaments that you had, whether they were volleyball or mostly basketball?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said you know, after we looked at it, and we took out the amount of clean up after these events, the wear and tear on the floor, the clean up in the parking lots the next day; it really wasn't that much. If you look at the big number, it does look like it is something, but when you start taking all of what it cost to have these tournaments here, it wasn't as much as you would think. I think we will get a lot more years out of that floor. Right now we started budgeting to replace this floor if I am not mistaken in 2027, we are putting away \$45,000. I really think this floor is going to last at least an extra 5 years by not having it take the abuse that it does for some of these different tournaments that we have in there.

Vice Mayor Grendel said thanks Tom.

Recreation Director Walchanowicz asked any other questions?

One last thing I just wanted to say is one of the big things we are going to working on starting within the next two weeks is the Christmas light decorations in the park. So, our staff is going to have a big part of that, and a lot of our efforts are going to go towards that. We are really looking forward to that, and I appreciate everybody's support of expanding this event in the park. Last year was just the tip of the iceberg, and I think this year we are really going to take it to the next level.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked Tom that company out of Iowa, is that the one that's doing the advising on that?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz replied yes, correct.

Chairperson Kapusta asked anything else Tom?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said no, that will wrap up my report here.

Chairperson Kapusta said okay, thank you very much. Are there any other matters that may come before the committee at this time?

Community Services Director Thomas said not from Community Services.

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Chairperson Kapusta said I would just like to take a minute then. This is my last meeting that I will be chairing for the Community Services Committee, and it has always been my goal over these years to have quarterly meetings because we wanted to show the support of what you all do at the Community Services Departments and also just to let people know to advance the outstanding work that you are doing. My affiliation with Community Services goes all the way back to 1994 when I received the first contract to work as a contract social worker and then came on full-time in 2000. So, when I joined City Council in 2014, it was my honor to be a part of the Community Services Committee to kind of sustain this 27 year relationship. I do believe, and I have always believed, that our Community Services and all the individuals who work there, the programming you do are really the pride of our City.

It has been my honor and my privilege to be involved with such a dynamic and hard working group of individuals please know that. It's evidenced every time we have a meeting. I so look forward to these meetings, and I hope the residents and fellow Council Members do as well because the preparation, the depth of preparation that you put into your presentations and the time that you take for it, it's like I am coming to watch a show because it's just so apparent. It also speaks volumes about your commitment to what you are doing, your desire to serve our residents, your cheering approach to doing that, it always shows. It shows in what you are doing, and I know that you are genuinely dedicated to the enhancement of the quality of life of our residents of all ages.

My final words to all of the staff of Community Services, not only those who are sitting here today, but our Rec and Community Services staff in total is just please keep doing the amazing job you are doing. You are appreciated and thank you for all that you do.

Do we have a motion to adjourn?

Vice Mayor Grendel said I just want make the comment that you did a fantastic job as Chairperson of this committee over the last 8 years. Like clockwork your meetings were held. They were well-prepared, both Tom has been well-prepared, and of course Emily is just starting out; but we have always had good representation from the Community Services too. You have run an outstanding operation there as the Chairperson, and I appreciate everything for all that you have done for us. Hopefully, your replacement will continue to have those regular meetings like that because it does shine light on all the great work that Community Services and the Rec Department does, and it keeps the public informed as well as it keeps Council well informed too of everything going on. Thank you very much for all of your hard work too.

Chairperson Kapusta said thank you for your comments, I appreciate them.

Mayor Kurtz said I also want to acknowledge and just again, you are still here, so we have a few more months to keep the accolades coming, they are well deserved and much appreciated by all of the residents and all of the people you have touched over the years in so many different capacities; and so I will save my long dissertation for the appropriate time at the end of the year. From this committee, and you can see how attentive they are, the directors, the people that work for all of us, they are engaged, they are passionate, and they truly appreciate the fact that you give them the time and the opportunity to share with you their excitement and all the different

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things they are involved with because you give them a forum to validate what they do for Council and what they do for the residents. So, thank you very much Kathleen.

Chairperson Kapusta said thank you Mayor. I appreciate all of your comments.

Do we have a motion to adjourn?

Recreation Director Walchanowicz said Kathleen I would like to just say something too. I would like to thank you for everything. I really appreciated this forum, the way we were able to present what we were doing because I think it is good that everyone knows what goes on behind the scenes and some facts from our department. When you came on board as the Chairperson of the Community Services Committee, you started this, and I really appreciate it. I know you always would say along the way, don't make yourself more work, but you know what, it was a little bit more work; but I will tell you what Kathleen, it was great. Again, from the bottom of my heart, I appreciate everything you do.

Chairperson Kapusta said thank you very much.

A motion to adjourn?

**Moved by Trakas, seconded by Walchanowicz, to adjourn the Community Services Committee Meeting of September 27, 2021. Voice Vote: 3 yes/0 no; motion carried.**

There being no further business to discuss, the Community Services Committee Meeting was adjourned at 5:21 p.m.

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Debra J. Beal, Clerk of Council  
**Minutes Unapproved at Time of Release 09/29/21**

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