

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE
FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
NOVEMBER 17, 2020 4:30 P.M.
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM**

Present: Chairman Vice Mayor Dave Grendel
Councilperson Kenn Synek
Councilperson Dale Veverka

Also Present: Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz
Councilperson Kathleen Kapusta
Councilperson Tom Narduzzi
Councilperson Jim Trakas
Councilperson Chris Walchanowicz
Finance Director Vern Blaze
City Engineer Don Ramm
Fire Chief Steve Rega
Procurement Coordinator Dennis Zdolshek

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 4:35 p.m.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said we did talk about having a meeting next Monday, our follow up meeting. Right now I know that Public Lands & Buildings is on Tuesday, correct Chris?

Councilperson Walchanowicz said yes.

Vice Mayor Grendel said that's at 4:30 p.m., but I know today we are planning to go to no longer than 6:00 p.m. Vern as far as our segment today. I think for Council's edification, we are considering just strictly today to do the appropriations. We are not going to look at the Five-Year Plan to give you more opportunity Vern to put things together and get with the Department Heads. So, today is strictly the 2021 Annual Appropriations Ordinance. I think we will go through that first in our progression and then go to the Five-Year Plan after that.

Finance Director Blaze said I am good either Monday or Tuesday of next week. If we can meet we might be doing a Cross Country Awards night on line Monday evening, but that wouldn't probably start until 7:00 p.m.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked Dale and Kenn would you fellows be available at say 4:30 p.m. next Monday to go 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Councilperson Synek said that will be good for me.

Councilperson Veverka replied yes.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked Mayor would that be alright with your schedule?

Finance Director Blaze said I talked with him before, and he indicated that Monday was doable but let's confirm.

Mayor Kurtz said next Monday will work for me.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. Debi, let's plan for next week.

Mayor Kurtz asked Dave you said 4:30 p.m.?

Vice Mayor Grendel said 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Kenn, can you make it, I know you always.

Councilperson Synek said I am wide open that day, we can do earlier if you want.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked Vern do you want to start either at 4:00 p.m. or 3:30 p.m.? Would this be ready to do a good chunk of that?

Finance Director Blaze said I would be in the office that day, so if earlier works better; and it works for the Mayor, then it works for Maggie and I too.

Vice Mayor Grendel said let's plan 3:30 p.m. if that's alright with everybody just to get an earlier start. Maybe we can be done a little bit earlier too; but Vern do you think two meetings would work with the appropriations, or do you think possibly you would want to have a third? I don't want to jump back and forth. I want to get everything pretty much set for the appropriations; and then we go to our Five-Year after that.

Finance Director Blaze said I think we will have a better gauge after today where we are. You have been through this many times with the City as I have and a number of people on the call. It just depends on the makeup of the group. Sometimes everybody is just fairly quiet, and there's not a lot of questions; and the Mayor presents and I talk. We flow through it pretty quick. I have been through this process where there have been deep dives and many questions on a lot of things, so the process has taken multiple meetings just to plow through the operating budget. I think we will have a better idea after we get close to 6:00 p.m. today how we are going to fare out on Monday.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we will meet at 3:30 p.m. next Monday, November 23rd, and then we will go from there to see how far we progress.

Well without further ado, I think everybody has received the document. I think it was a 14 page document Vern that was sent to us.

Finance Director Blaze said correct. It's the second version. The first version might have gotten sent over kind of formatted to be printed on a legal size page; so it was reformatted today and resent so that it formats better on a letter size page. It's 14 pages one-sided, or 7 pages if you print both sides. The only change everybody has to look on each of the 14 pages is the third last

column to the right, it's labeled 2019 approved budget to date; and that really should be the 2020 approved budget to date. So, outside of that being changed on every page, every title having everything else is, we hope that we don't have any changes that we see yet.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. You also provided us I think the page is called the 2021 Budget Support.

Finance Director Blaze said it was just a one page summary, and it's the first step toward a more comprehensive process. Instead of just presenting Council with excel spreadsheets with figures on them, have some narrative behind that. I think that helps us move to a better overall budget document in the future where there's a story attached to each of these numbers. So, this is just a one page, it's a start. Hopefully in future years the budget support document would be even more thorough and more encompassing; but it's a start to give Council some background on some of the figures and help them with questions and just being able to decipher what is being proposed for 2021.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. Well Vern I guess without further ado, and Mayor, we will start with Page 1 of the appropriations; and that is the Police Department. Vern, I will let you and Greg handle the presentation at this point.

Finance Director Blaze said thank you Vice Mayor. The Police Department was one of the areas on that one page budget support document, I just wrote a few things down. The assistant Chief's position has been vacant since about early summer. It has not been filled. So, that's obviously a budget impact to the positive, if you are looking at dollars and sense and maybe negative from a service standpoint. The questions for the committee and Council is how does that affect the 2021 budget? Are there plans to replace that individual, that position? Is that potentially going to be replaced with an internal candidate? If so, would the position being vacated by the internal candidate looked to be filled? Then maybe some discussion by the Mayor and/or Chief if he's on line regarding some potential hires in 2021 because the budget support summary indicated that the Civil Service Commission did provide some latitude, and I really appreciate it just from my standpoint, I have always pushed for a little bit more flexibility in the hiring process. Laterals occur in the private sector every day, but for the longest time they were always kind of prohibited in the public sector; but you are seeing more and more Police and Fire departments, at least in northeast Ohio, gravitating toward that because of just the long term trend of less qualified applicants taking the initial appointment exam and then the events of 2020 putting so much pressure on the Police Departments all over the country. I think a lot of Chiefs and safety personnel will find that's even impacted the ability to attract new candidates even more. So, the lateral process might be something that's looked at a little more seriously by many departments. So, if Independence is going to look at that, what kind of numbers are we looking at? One person, two person, three person coming on in the beginning of the year, staggered throughout the year? Once the Finance Department has some answers to questions like that, then it would be able to proceed and attach some estimated dollar costs to those decisions.

Mayor Kurtz said Vice Mayor, the Finance Director is correct in that with respect to the Deputy Chief, we are looking at our command structure going forward as we speak. With respect to new hires, the lateral list, plus I think for 2021 I am going to ask the Civil Service Commission to do

a new and lateral list so that we have a little combination of new hires; and we will see how robust the testing is as well as the utilization of lateral for replacement.

It's hard with the DROP program to completely pinpoint the needs in terms of personnel which is our largest expense item in the Police Department; but we have a good feel that several people will be retiring in 2021. So, the goal would be to have people in play or in service as a overlap, there may be a small overlap of time; but the cost structure will also be reduced on a one for one basis with the cost of someone retiring versus someone being lateral or a new hire. So, look at the make up being about the same in terms of the number of people. Maybe it will increase, but that will be predicated on how many people actually do retire. We have a good feel that there could be three or more; but we will be in a good position after the first quarter to be able to anticipate that later in the year.

Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Mayor. I noticed we did approve, of course, those cameras at the last Council meeting in November. Would that lease, the cost of leasing those cameras, appear on our appropriations because we are not purchasing them, we are actually leasing them. So, Vern will that appear on this page when we approve it?

Finance Director Blaze said TBD, we might request some outside expertise from Councilperson Synek found out this was a capital lease and we should just capitalize it and consider it in capital or is it more of an operating lease and it goes on the operating budget? Either way, it will be accounted for and actually has been accounted for by the budget amendment that Council approved last week.

Vice Mayor Grendel said when I look at the past, going back to 2016, it seems like every year the actual expenses, we are up about \$100,000 approximately per year. Again, those are various factors that go into that; but I think in years past, and correct me if I'm wrong, I know when John Veres was the Finance Director, I think he just used a percentage when he did the appropriations for the following year. He did a percentage increase based on past actual amounts. So, it's hard, and again we have the flexibility during the year to amend the appropriations.

Finance Director Blaze said that's a valid way to proceed for sure. I sat down with the Mayor and Directors a few times this past month, and last month really and said look I personally and I think the Mayor now would like to give the Directors a little bit more of a seat at the table as far as their budgets, not just managing them, a budget handed to them by the far off Finance Department but actually creating their budgets too.

You saw in a couple of weekly updates ago the budget award that we handed out to Chief Rega and Assistant Chief Wheeler in the Fire Department, and we did single them out because they kind of set the bar as far as providing the Mayor and providing the Finance Department with how they want to go forward every single year; and I didn't provide that entire document to Council, and we will get to Fire next, Page 2 of 14; and what Chief Rega and Assistant Chief Wheeler go through the process, I think is the Mayor's and my goal for all of the Directors to eventually see the wisdom of because for every single line on the Fire Department budget there, just say the highest cost is wages, the very first line. Chief Rega and Assistant Chief Wheeler have a breakdown of, well we didn't just take last year's number and multiple it times 1.03 and that's

what we are asking for this year. What they have is a list of every single employee in their department, where they are on the wage scale if they are in the union. Where they are if they are not. What is their scheduled wages for 2021? What is the scheduled overtime? What is the schedule longevity payments? What is this? What is that? They have it broken down and calculated to the penny of what their wages and every single line on that budget is going to be estimated to be. To me, that's true management. That's really knowing the numbers of your department. You need the people skills and you need the number skills. If you have both, that's great. That's the Mayor's and my goal is to kind of have the Directors take a little more ownership in the process. That's why it's taking a little bit longer. We could have just taken last year's numbers, threw 3% on wages, a couple percent on health insurance and say hey here's the 2021 budget let's go at it. Again, it's a valid way, and it might come up to be fairly close to what we do with this process; but I think with this process the Mayor is going to find that the people reporting to him have a much better understanding of the operations of their department, the consequences of their decisions, especially the cost consequences and specifically labor costs since that's usually the highest component of everybody's operating budget. It's your wages, your pension and the medical insurance.

Mayor Kurtz said it's another factor that the Finance Director eluded to, we are trying to empower the different Department Heads; but obviously there are factors that skew the budget when it comes, you can't determine how many snow events we are going to have. You can't determine some of these flood events, these emergencies. We do the best we can to estimate and safeguard the budget from those episodic situations; but we also are charged with the responsibility of building the bench. I have told every Department Head that you have to plan your future. In other words, you can't just walk out one day without leaving the City, leaving the company that you helped grow or build or be part of without having a bench that you feel comfortable that can carry on. So, there's additional costs involved with that, but it's the only way to really run an organization and plan out beyond your tenure.

Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Mayor. I wanted to point out too, if you notice the very last line is contractual services. I believe that represents the dispatchers. We didn't have the figure up to 2018, and then with the dispatch center. So, that's a new item on there; but we removed the dispatchers that we had on with their wages and overtime and everything else that they had. That is where that contractual services came in; you will notice that's where the difference is.

The other thing too that we point out is for the Fire; if you notice under Fire there's a pension line and there's a contribution of approximately a half a million or so; but that is not on the Police. Is that the inside millage situation Vern?

Finance Director Blaze said correct. The vast majority of the Police pension is expensed out of the Police pension fund. It's Number 810 or whatever it is, the last fund we have. So, in reality we should probably show that on the operating budget just like we do the SCM&R under Service Department even though that's technically not a 110 account, it's not a General Fund account. I consider it that the pension is part of the operating costs; so maybe we will. That's a good catch. We can start showing the Police pension in the Police Department even though it's not a 110 cost just so people are aware of that total overall cost component. You do see some OPERS in the

Police because there are some civilian employees and such that are not on the Police pension plan.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I see. Committee, any questions? Kenn or Dale, any questions for Vern?

Councilperson Synek said I did have a question. So, just looking at the numbers through October or wages for Police, if I annualize that it comes to like \$2,600,000 or \$2,700,000 which is considerably lower than 2019; is there like three pay month or anything like that in November and December? Or are the actual costs running that much less than the year before?

Finance Director Blaze said I believe we got the two three pay months through already this year. I will confirm that in a few seconds; but what you did was exactly the methodology that I go through every month just to get a handle on how are we doing based on our current run rate of expenditures. Of course, the more months you have expended, the more accurate your projection can be. So, it's very valid. You take that \$2,200,000 and divide it by 10 months, multiply that figure times 12, and it does come out to be less than the budgeted amount which is good for one. I think part of it, not all of it, at least part of it is attributable to that Deputy Chief position being vacant for the last six months; and then I just have to assume that with the Coronavirus, there was very little activity in the initial Coronavirus March/April. The streets, if you drove around Independence, even during rush hour were devoid of traffic. So, this is just an assumption on my part that the Chief didn't have to schedule to the max like he had to in past years to adequately cover the City some of the months this year.

Mayor Kurtz said we are also down three people too. They will be replaced in 2021.

Councilperson Synek said it's good for the City, but not so good for the Police Officers, but overtime is down considerably from what it's been in years past too. I suppose that is a Covid thing.

Mayor Kurtz said exactly.

Finance Director Blaze said Councilperson Synek, I stand corrected. We do have one more third pay in December; so that will skew it up a little bit. We have had two officers who had injury occurrences a couple of years ago and finally have fallen off the payroll. They are not terminated from the City's employment right now, but the City is not paying them out of that 110 wages. So, between the third pay coming up in December, the Deputy Chief's position being vacant for six months and the two officers not being paid anymore on that 110 line, that accounts for most of the cost difference.

Councilperson Synek said thank you.

Vice Mayor Grendel said the next contract for health insurance will take effect July 1st of next year. The current contract that we have runs through June 30th.

Finance Director Blaze said that's correct, and I believe the Mayor and Human Resources Director and our department is already taking some additional steps to put that on our radar screen and not wait until the last minute just to knee jerk a decision at that point. So, we are going to be very involved on the front end of that curve; and of course that involves the Healthcare Committee as well.

Vice Mayor Grendel said so that might have an effect in the second half of next year as far as the budgeting goes too.

Finance Director Blaze said yes it could. It will be a six month expenditure though by that point instead of a full year; so even if we got a 3% increase, we would only have to budget 1 ½% to get us through the rest of 2021. Let's be positive and hope that the Wellness program and our experience rating this year and the first part of next year result in some competitive bids, and it's just not a given that every single year we are going to pay more than we did last year.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we had a good run with Medical Mutual there for a number of years until this past year. Any other questions? Dale, any questions or Council any questions for the Finance Director or the Mayor?

Councilperson Trakas said this is more for the Mayor. St. Michael's pulled the cat shelter a year ago or so; and I was just curious where is the current animal shelter? Is there any plans we might be able to get something back in the center of town again? I think it was popular, and I know a number of volunteers that went up there including Mrs. Blaze and Mrs. Trakas; and I was just curious if there were any additional plans?

Mayor Kurtz said in recently talking with the church, the owner of those properties, I believe that they may be in the position to begin razing. I will find out if that's not the case. I know they are using it for storage, their properties for storage right now; and so it's not clear to me as to if it's available. We can research that one.

Councilperson Trakas said and perhaps if it's not those structures, those were private property, if there might be something else. I think it was popular. I think a lot of the residents enjoyed going up there and adopting out the animals. Where do we have the current shelter, I am not familiar with it?

Mayor Kurtz said the only place we have anything is at the Service Department.

Councilperson Trakas said okay, when it says Animal Shelter, that's where we have it. Thank you Mayor. I would just like to go on the record saying if we can try and accommodate, I think the residents would like to have some type of a little bit more of a public animal shelter so that they might be able to adopt some of the dogs and cats out. If there's a way we can look, into that, I think it would be appreciated by our residents.

Mayor Kurtz said if Mrs. Trakas and Mrs. Blaze would want to volunteer their time, then we can be creative about that.

Councilperson Trakas said at least two residents.

Mayor Kurtz said well you are on record now, you know that.

Finance Director Blaze said you are right. There's a lot of animal lovers in town, and for the minimal cost it was in previous years, it does provide a nice service. It's a shame it can't be at St. Michael's there because it used to be nice after service would let out on Saturday afternoon or Sunday to walk over. It just was a natural step coming out of church and then trying to do something good for these animals.

Mayor Kurtz said although if anybody does have any ideas, I am always open to accommodate them.

Finance Director Blaze said we are trying to get some properties under contract across the street, I know it will be an interim use; but it could be something.

Mayor Kurtz said you're right.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said then we use Jim's basement.

Councilperson Trakas said it's already in use, though not commercially.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we will have to increase the parking over there.

Councilperson Trakas said I will ask for a variance.

Several people began speaking at once.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked well any other questions regarding Page 1, the Police Department?

Councilperson Kapusta asked I just wanted to question, is the Animal Control Officer position still shared with the City of Seven Hills?

Finance Director Blaze said yes.

Councilperson Kapusta asked and how is that working out?

Finance Director Blaze said I only see from the financial end when she turns in a receipt if she takes an animal in custody; and they have to pay to get released, but I think the Mayor and/or the Chief can comment on how the shared duties are working out better than our office can.

Mayor Kurtz said I can just report that no news is good news.

Councilperson Kapusta said and so when we see these wages reflected here, is that the total wages for that position? Is it a payback system with Seven Hills? Or how does that work?

Finance Director Blaze said we charge them every few months. The number you see there on that line, Wages Animal Control, that are the wages that the City pays. We have to appropriate the entire wages. What you don't see is a revenue offset page, and that would show up where Seven Hills pays us through their compensation agreement.

Councilperson Kapusta said okay, thank you.

Finance Director Blaze said well Vice Mayor 30 minutes for a department; we should be done with this by February.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. With some of us, there's a little bit of bookkeeping there too.

Finance Director Blaze said I think the more thorough, the better because the Directors have a thorough understanding, the Council has a thorough understanding, everybody is up to speed and it's not just a quick process where we are trying to ram it through. I say that jokingly. The more time we take diving into each page, the better off in my book. I would rather have educated colleagues around me than just people who aren't quite sure what's going on with the numbers.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. Dale, I think you had a question.

Councilperson Veverka said while we are in the center of town you had mentioned a cat shelter. Has the deal on the Kin properties, has that been sealed Mr. Mayor?

Mayor Kurtz said it's active as we speak. As soon as we have a firm position, I will report to Council.

Councilperson Veverka said thank you.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we will move on to Page 2 which is the Fire Department, and again looking I think Vern you have some comments made on your budget support sheet.

Finance Director Blaze said right, and it's just stating that the Chief as far as I could tell was proposing no new total staff. I am not sure where they are with their current appointment list, if they even have an active list; but I know the Mayor's comments regarding the Police Department probably could be echoed in the Fire Department too. When you have 24 firefighters, a number of them, and 5 Lieutenants, a number of those 29; they might not all be at the upper end of the career ladder, but there could be some retirements coming there too. So, my general impression is that if that happens, the Chief was just looking for a one to one replacement and not any additional new hires for 2021.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked any questions regarding the Fire Department with the Finance Director? Any comments Mayor as far as from your perspective?

Mayor Kurtz said no. I think the Finance Director indicated that we use the Fire Department as our template for the other departments in terms of the budgeting process. So, it's self-explanatory really. It works well.

Councilperson Kapusta said I noticed on the Health Watch Lifeline that it's kind of a blank all the way across. Did that get reallocated to some other field somewhere Vern?

Finance Director Blaze said I have to look down in General Government, I will bet that's where I would find it.

Fire Chief Rega said I could probably comment on that.

Finance Director Blaze said it's in General Government now. We have \$41,200 approved this year for the budget, but \$55,000 requested for 2021.

Councilperson Kapusta said thank you.

Fire Chief Rega said under that Lifeline Program we do fully manage that as far as going out and installing and maintenance and everything. With that, we found that when we are trying to get grants, having that just being the caretaker of the account right there was a big increase in our budget. So, we just moved it into General Government where it gets paid pretty much the same. I do review each invoice that comes in, and I oversee that; but it just doesn't come out of our planned budget.

Councilperson Kapusta said out of curiosity too Chief, what is our volume with that program right now?

Fire Chief Rega said we run consistently at about 150-160 participants; and then we usually have about 10 to 12 additional providers on each account. So, there might be two people on one system.

Councilperson Kapusta said thank you.

Finance Director Blaze said since the Chief is on the line, let the Mayor and I publicly thank him again for him and his team with putting together that budget document. When Council when we are back in person, and you are in City Hall more and you are walking by my office, stop in. I will pull out the budget document that the Chief prepares every year and show it to you. You can flip through it, and it will just crystalize for you why we would like to see the other departments mimic that process. It's just a fantastic document, and to see it coming from somebody who in theory is not a financially account trained type person. He comes from the emergency medical field, but to understand the importance of this budget, the time and effort that he and Assistant Chief Wheeler take putting that together. It's very commendable.

Fire Chief Rega said thanks Vern. I did want to mention one thing on that wage line. I do have a provision in there for two new officers; but that has to go through a lot of review and development with the Mayor. We have to look at legislation on that as well to increase the

number of Lieutenants as well. So, there will be a lot of discussion on that. I just wanted to make Council aware of the need for the funding if we decide to go that route. So, it's still a work in progress.

Finance Director Blaze said thanks, and I believe you have at least one retirement that you know of for sure.

Fire Chief Rega said that's probably why you don't see a huge fluctuation in the total budget is because we have three people that we project are retiring here the first quarter, or the first half of the year in the next year. So, there is a big significant difference in wages between a top level full-time and somebody coming in the door new. That's another reason, I know you mentioned with the Police budget, our wages might be a little bit off from where they were projected was we did have a person leave in January that was at top pay; and we brought in another person not until March. So, there were extra funds in there that were accounted for which wasn't accounted with that person leaving.

Councilperson Trakas said I just wanted to clarify Chief. So, on Vern's document it says no proposed change to the staff makeup, but you are indicating that you built in wages for two additional staff. Is that correct?

Fire Chief Rega said yes. I am proposing that, but again we have to change some legislation in order to actually fill those positions; so Council would have to approve that.

Councilperson Trakas said so the proposed budget does not include that number, is that what you are telling me?

Fire Chief Rega said it does include that.

Finance Director Blaze said Councilperson Trakas, you could strike that no proposed changes to this makeup. That was my initial quick look at the departmental makeup, and again there will be some subtractions the first half of the year, some additions when they are replaced. It could change the makeup if Council agrees to change the number of Lieutenant positions.

Councilperson Trakas said okay, thank you very much.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I notice too, it must be the result of the Covid that there's been no expenditure for the residential lock box program.

Fire Chief Rega said typically that particular line is in case somebody gets reimbursed or turns it back in or something to that effect. We have to refund the person. We do buy those, and sometimes people donate them back and they get repurposed and back out in the field. It's not a big movement on that particular line.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I see. I know it came in handy with my father-in-law's house. I notice training and travel expenses are down again substantially because of the pandemic.

Fire Chief Rega said we are entering into an agreement for that one year with Lexipol. It's kind of a training as well as policy and procedure, that particular line was moved around. A couple of the lines, we are finishing up some projects. The building maintenance, I think we are replacing the tables in our training room. That's been a long time trying to get, everybody knows if you order some furniture it takes many months. That's the case here. We are supposed to take delivery of those next week. Some of those lines will actually change before the end of the year.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I see. Any other questions for Chief? Well thank you Chief. We are ready to move on to Page 3, the Parks and Recreation.

Finance Director Blaze said yes thank you Vice Mayor. In Parks and Recreation you can see their budget is divided up into a number of different sub-categories so they actually take up Pages 3 and 4. A little bit more complicated for them given that a lot of part-time employees, a lot of seasonal employees traditionally; I think the expenditure rate you will see in that second last column for some of the part-time wages may not have reached the levels anticipated because when the budget was passed in the first quarter that the effects of Covid and all that were not known. The Recreation Director was able to have the Little League baseball programs this summer, fall outdoor programs. The pool did open, albeit late; but it did open with some restricted hours. I think 2020 was a unique year expenditure wise in this department; and then the next one we talk about Community Services Department just because of the programming being just in such a state of flux this year in 2020 with everything happening. So, it's probably has more money budgeted this year than will be needed; but nobody really anticipated what 2020 was going to look like when we were putting this document together in January, February, the first part of March this year.

One thing I will note is the Rec Director made a point of kind of pointing out that there's a category on there, Fieldhouse that building is just reopened now this month after being essentially shut down since Covid. So, the expenses there were minimal for 2020. He did point out that it's a hard category there that Fieldhouse category on the top of Page 4 to specifically itemize individual expenses for because most of the labor costs associated with operating the Fieldhouse are operated by people who are not just employed at the Fieldhouse. They work at the Recreation Department in the park. They work at the Civic Center. They work at the Old Rec. They work at the Fieldhouse; and so there are not a lot of employees who just specifically can be costed out to the Fieldhouse alone. So, he actually had a suggestion that entire category could almost be rolled into another category and not break it out as such because it's a little misleading to think that all each one of those dollar expenditures are exactly attributable to the Fieldhouse because the reason I just stated that all of those employees do double and triple duty as far as the buildings they work at. So, we would have to spend an enormous amount of time costing out their wages every single pay period, every two weeks about how many hours for them in this department, how many hours were they in that department. It's just not done, but at least the cost is there and Council has a handle on what's at least charged off to that category in past years and what is being proposed by the Recreation Director for 2021.

Councilperson Synek asked would this not be the year Vern to make that change?

Finance Director Blaze said we are open to it. I could see why it was put in there in the first place when the Fieldhouse was opened and the former Finance Director put that in because you want to try as hard as possible to cost out your costs. Hey, we have a cost for the pool. We have a cost section for concession stands. We have this one for Fieldhouse. I could see the genesis for it, but it's been a little bit harder to implement. I think it's something I will talk about with Maggie and see if it's worth taking you up on that suggestion and folding it down, folding it in this year or if we want to take the time going forward and trying to cost out wages every two weeks and allocate them to that Fieldhouse to get a more accurate number. Either way it's not going to change when you get to the bottom of Page 4 total Recreation, the number will not change no matter where we cost it out to, it will just be in the level of detail that you see.

Councilperson Kapusta said I would agree with Councilperson Synek, and to speak to your earlier point Vern, when we had Bill Furman's position there; and that was probably as a Coordinator, one of the expense areas that you could put for this building. When he left our City, that's when I know that Director Walchanowicz took it upon himself to work with his staff to see just as your saying how they can reallocate those responsibilities which I thought were just amazing that he did and his staff did. It appears to be working. I think that there's probably less of a need to have that category as well.

Mayor Kurtz said you are all correct. There's an overlap, so it's hard to compartmentalize. It works, you are right Councilperson Kapusta, it works.

Finance Director Blaze said I think we are going to gravitate toward doing that. If somebody ever asks a question in the future, hey Finance Department what does it cost the City to run the Fieldhouse in 2020 or 2021? Then it will take a little more doing to answer that question accurately, but not impossible.

Vice Mayor Grendel said so Vern it looks like at this point the proposed budget for 2021 is pretty much, it's more than what was appropriated for last year; but we are probably going to have the same results with the Covid still around. We are probably going to see the end results being, unless something changes mid-year, maybe with the vaccine it will. At this point, we are budgeting pretty much similar to what we budgeted for 2020.

Finance Director Blaze said that's correct. Just a little bit, I think that Recreation Director just asked for a couple percent recognition for any wage increases in 2021. One line item that he added in both the pools and maybe one other department was uniform allowance and maintenance. He doesn't want to go down the path of providing all uniforms, but I think in his conversations with the Mayor, they both want to establish some kind of like Jessica talks about establishing a brand for Independence at large from an economic development standpoint, the Rec Director and Mayor want to establish a brand for the Recreation Department. They want to get some more uniformity, to their uniforms and he would like to buy some t-shirts for a lot of the part-time and summer employees so that when they are working at the pool, they are working at the concession, they are working the park, they all have an identifiable shirt. They are all wearing the same shirt so that the members of the public are very clear on who works for the park and who doesn't. So, if they have a questions or have a problem, they don't have to stand their scratching their head like oh boy does that person work for the City or not?

There is a line that you will see for some uniforms that he would like to establish here in 2021.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. Any questions? Kathleen.

Councilperson Kapusta said I have a question regarding the senior citizens line, I understand that to be the \$15,000 that the City so kindly allocates to our senior organization every year. Would I be correct in assuming that since it's been in abeyance since Covid that we are going to just maintain the \$7,500 that we have given so far and not the full \$15,000 since they are not functioning?

Finance Director Blaze said they really haven't met so I don't know what would be the trigger for them to request the second \$7,500 payment short of hey you guys budgeted for it, we want it type thing; but it's a question to ask. If things are going to be curtailed in the first part of 2021, do we need to budget \$15,000? Right now we are budgeting the \$15,000 like we have in the past. We are not proposing any deviation from that. If we don't end up making that second payment this year, then it's just \$7,500 that we appropriated that we didn't need to spend.

Mayor Kurtz said keep in mind, we are talking about the complete 2021 vision. So, what happens today doesn't necessarily apply, we save some money in this case; but we spent it in meals. There's these dynamics that are always moving around every year.

Councilperson Kapusta said the money that we were allocating was used for operations, the meals that they were providing and entertainment; and since they didn't, it just shifted. That is what I was thinking.

Finance Director Blaze said and a heads up for Council, the Rec Director pointed out that some expenditures such as that senior citizens line that you questioned Councilperson Kapusta, the July 4th line, a couple of other ones like that which are expended in the Recreation Department budget just as Chief Rega said that health line is expended out of the Fire Department budget, but it got moved to General Government. We are probably going to move at least the July 4th fireworks display and the senior citizens' line out of Recreation into General Government. They don't have the direct link to the senior citizens like the Community Services Department would and even their department. We can throw it in there, but I think we are leaning toward expending it out of the General Government category.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked Vern does that \$10,500 that reflected a payment on the July 4th for the fireworks. Was that our first payment?

Finance Director Blaze said the Chief is still on line if we had to make the deposit, and maybe him and the Mayor have an update if they just got that contract punted to 2021, the same contract that we signed for 2020 will be valid? Until somebody corrects me, I think we probably owed, probably the terms of the contract were 50% down; and with that \$21,000 dollar amount, that \$10,500 was half of that.

Fire Chief Rega said to my knowledge, we had paid the first installment of that just after the first of the year for the fireworks, and we have had them on hold all year. We are just paying the

remainder amount of the display this year which I think is \$13,000; so it's only another \$3,000. I did hear that we had to pay that full amount; but we are in a contract with them for next year as well. So, we are locked in on that pricing.

Mayor Kurtz said the event is going to be shortened obviously, the Christmas event; but we had a minimum that we had to use so that's what we are going to do.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I see. Any other questions regarding Page 3 or 4?

Fire Chief Rega said just to clarify the Mayor's statement there, we were going to get charged roughly \$6,000 just for the costs they incur on the fireworks throughout this year. So, in a sense we were going to lose that money anyway; but that's why we put together a smaller show and are moving forward with that.

Mayor Kurtz said the show is going to be about 12 to 15 minutes at tree lighting ceremony this year.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked and that's going to be up at the park Mayor?

Mayor Kurtz said yes, that's correct. It's a more of a residential feature than the entire greater Cleveland feature.

Vice Mayor Grendel said Jim you had a question.

Councilperson Trakas said in terms of overtime, in 2019 and 2021 we seem to have budgeted quite a bit more for overtime than we actually were spending in prior years. I am just wondering what the thought was behind that.

Finance Director Blaze said we could drill down and look that. I am looking at the approved budget to date \$19,000, the first overtime line. The proposed 2021 budget was \$15,000. Okay, I see what you are seeing; we only spent \$2,700 so why the \$15,000? I think it's the Recreation Director's acknowledgement, maybe we don't need the \$19,000 that was asked for this year; but he has to go into the winter season and the budget season here when the budget gets passed feeling that look the Covid is going to end at some point and am going to have a "normal" year with my department. So, I am going to have the normal overtime expenditures that I have in a typical year. He kind of didn't have it in 2019 on that line, but in 2017 and 2018 he was at \$17,000 and \$16,000 respectively. So, I think that gets to the Mayor's point earlier about there are sometimes events that we can't just forecast. We might look at Parks & Recreation as strictly the recreational services that they provide, but keep in mind that anytime there is a major rain and flood event, the Park takes a bulk of that water activity. You have the Elmwood Park creek that overflows and the creek overflowing in Elmwood pond; and we have all been around where it's overflowed into the pool and all hands are on deck at that point because the pool has to be drained, cleaned, refilled and reheated and open in as little time as possible. That takes labor costs to do that. So, I think the Rec Director is just planning for the worst case scenario based on the worst case he has had over the last couple of years.

Councilperson Trakas said thank you, that's good.

Councilperson Kapusta said just a little aside on the whole Christmas thing. I am happy to hear that we are going to be using those fireworks for that purpose and the tree lighting. Is this something that we have in the past or that we could consider Mayor videotaping so that it could be somehow made available to our people like on our YouTube channel or Facebook or something because I am thinking that we probably need this more than ever this year, another way to celebrate something for Christmas that will be different. I also think we have a segment of our population that may be a little bit more adverse than usual this year to coming out. I think that would be a nice gesture if it's feasible.

Mayor Kurtz said absolutely Councilperson Kapusta. We will look into that for sure.

Councilperson Kapusta said okay, thank you.

Finance Director Blaze said we watch the Macy's Day Parade and other parades Thanksgiving morning, why don't we have the Independence tree lighting parade; and we could take your suggestion and livestream that too.

Mayor Kurtz said Vern you can't give away everything we are doing. We have to have an element of surprise. The kids won't appreciate if there's no element of surprise.

Finance Director Blaze said we are going to surprise the residents who don't know it's on.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. Well then any other questions? I see Page 5 is where we end with the proposed 2021 budget.

Finance Director Blaze said oh no there's many pages after that, it's just Page 5 is where the Service starts; and Leon's department did not have the numbers roughed to a point we felt comfortable putting them on the document. We do have Community Services, and then when you flip past Service and go to Page 9, you pick back up Technical Service, IT. We can fill up to 6:00 p.m. easy.

Vice Mayor Grendel said well let's move to Page 5 with the Civic Center.

Finance Director Blaze said it's called Civic Center. I view that as Community Services Department. The big story there is the same in Rec, programming is significantly curtailed this year. They did a yeoperson's job trying to provide services to the community that they did this year; but that still didn't come with as much cost as it typically would take. I think their attitude is the same as the Recreation Director's, we have to plan like 2021 is going to be a "normal" year as far as programming. The big changes are requesting a separate line on the bottom for the adult bus trips of \$25,000, and then that 55+ lunch line that we talked about and have legislation on First Reading. We promised we would have a line item for that so that it's just, once legislation gets approved and a vendor list is approved, and it gives Community Services flexibility and some backup. Then we have a line item and budget for it. Then everybody should be comfortable that the program is being run the way it is intended to.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked where are you showing the 55+ lunches for this year?

Finance Director Blaze said it's just in there. I would have to get the exact line, but we are breaking it out in a separate line for 2021.

Councilperson Trakas said it's right underneath transportation.

Finance Director Blaze said it's for 2021.

Several people began speaking at once.

Councilperson Kapusta said I would ask that same question regarding the transportation as well. We obviously paid for transportation, not this past year, we didn't do much; but normally we would since we no longer have our City bus. So, I would wonder where that had been previously as well.

Finance Director Blaze said we will find that out.

Councilperson Synek asked the transportation adult bus trips, is that the cost of gas or the driver?

Finance Director Blaze said no, that's to lease the bus from one of the bus companies. That seems to be the preferred method by Community Services the last couple of years. They could expand further as to why that seems to be both better operationally and financially.

Councilperson Kapusta said I could add a few things for that from our Community Services Committee, and God rest her soul, from Marilyn Senick's remarks over time. You know, we had thought about this for a number of years when we looked at owning our own bus versus having the rentals; and this year in particular the rentals really were the way to have gone because our bus used to sit. Our bus used to have, of course, all of the preventative maintenance. We had not only the initial purchase costs on that and everything, but when the bus would go down as it was known to do, then we were scrambling. We were scrambling to get our people back from wherever they might have been; and now when that does happen, if that does happen, it's not our issue. The bus company that we are using quickly expends their personnel and vehicles bringing our people back. It is just a world of better as far as Marilyn said, and what we have discussed over time in our Community Services Committee as well.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked any questions for our Finance Director or Mayor? It looks like the actually the difference in the budget from last year 2020 to this year is really, at least from 2019, was centered around the \$300,000 for the luncheons.

Finance Director Blaze said correct and \$25,000 for the bus; so, in a sense, not really requesting a budget increase just kind of recognizing some of the expenses that will be expended out of that department in 2021.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. Any other questions? We can move on to Page 9, and that's the Technical Service at the top there.

Finance Director Blaze said correct.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I see that proposed budget is a little bit lower than what we had for, well not really 2020, but for 2019, 2018 where you had over \$1,000,000 budgeted.

Finance Director Blaze said the Mayor might be able to speak more to that based on his latest conversation with the Director. My knee jerk is that we did have one departure from that department this year that has not been replaced, and the Mayor can speak to if that's the intent going forward or if we should look at budgeting for someone to replace that individual in 2021.

Mayor Kurtz said I think the discipline, you know we did lose somebody, and the Director has indicated that he would like to replace; but we are going to be disciplined enough to find someone who has a skill set, potential qualifications that could allow us to do more work and certifications, etc. So, we are leaving that open ended because we believe there's more work that we can get done.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked what areas are you looking for, what skills?

Mayor Kurtz said you know electrical, plumbing, HVAC, all the technical aspects.

Finance Director Blaze said the initial thought on the Director's part was a part-time employee not a full-time; so you will see that on the part-time wages Tech. We haven't expended any money out of there the last couple of years, but we did add \$40,000 on to the 2021 proposed budget if it ends up being a full-time employee. That number if approved could easily get moved up to the line above it.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked any questions? We will move down to Information Technology, and I believe Mayor aren't we looking for an employee there for the Help Desk I believe?

Mayor Kurtz said there are several different options, and we will be coming to Council in the near future about CRM and IT and a more comprehensive approach to managing data that will allow us to be more efficient in our recordkeeping but also in our ability to respond to our customers, whether they be business customers or residential. We just are positioning ourselves for the long term. This is an important component.

Finance Director Blaze said you do see some significant increases there, both on the full-time wage line and the part-time wage line; but that reflects, as you said Vice Mayor, probably a Help Desk person and a secondary person to Ryan and/or vice versa. So, there's some reflection in that on the wages as well as Ryan believes that we really need to keep taking advanced steps for that computer software maintenance. That's why we have already spent \$103,000 year to date on that line. He is asking for a full \$200,000, less than 2019, but still more than expended in this year. If the CRM project comes through, I don't know what the timeframe is on that. I know since it's just in the initial exploratory phase right now that it's going to be a while before that comes to fruition as far as a hard dollar cost number that we have to deal with in the budget. If it comes later in 2021, so be it. I think we can deal with it at that time. I just know from some of the CRM projects I have seen in some other public entities, they weren't projects that you

announced one year and then were able to be fully implemented the following year. It took a number of years to announce it, study it, plan it, implement it and get it up and running. So, if Council desires to put a placeholder figure in the budget for the CRM in 2021, we can. I am not so sure it's critical yet at this point and time.

Mayor Kurtz said it is critical, more critical, keep in mind and Council appropriated \$130,000 or so dollars in 2019 for the Building Department with Tyler; and we spent the year implementing. So, we are looking, as we speak, at a more comprehensive program. It's going to cost, if we spent \$130,000 for the Building Department alone, \$250,000 is not unreasonable for the various departments throughout the City and linking that all together. There's linkage, there's efficiency, and although the Finance Director eluded to the fact that we are not quite there yet; I agree with him that there should be a placeholder figure, and we will put that together for our next meeting where we can have further discussion if that's okay.

Finance Director Blaze said not a problem to add it.

Vice Mayor Grendel said that IT it's important. We must have been the training ground because our last two have gone on to other cities and have done very well.

Mayor Kurtz said right, and that's a very astute observation and a fair question because what it means is that we need to elevate again; every time we elevate, they go someplace else. So, we are in the process of reviewing that to make sure that we can come up with the same type of situation we had when Jim was here where it's very fluid, and we are able to understand clearly what our goals are. Council can appropriate the monies accordingly. So, that's our goal, and we are taking time like the Finance Director said to prepare and implement. We will put that together for the next meeting.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. Any questions?

Councilperson Kapusta asked for point of clarification then, we are currently a one person department? Is that correct?

Mayor Kurtz said one, and then we have some other team members from other departments that can pinch hit to keep a computer running or little things like my phone's not working, things of that nature.

Councilperson Kapusta said when Jim was here we had two; we had Jim and an assistant.

Mayor Kurtz said right, but again I caution, we are going to need those positions. We are going to need to allocate monies and make sure that we don't lag behind, especially with security being a priority today. We need to be in a position to protect our data, protect our environment.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked any questions for Vern or the Mayor?

Councilperson Trakas said just one quick question. So, we routinely approve agreements with vendors, software vendors for maintenance. Where is that in the budget document?

Finance Director Blaze said that's that computer software and maintenance line almost to the bottom.

Councilperson Trakas said that's the entirety there. Okay, copy that. We are trying to beef that. I thought it was under news and subscriptions, and I thought that was low. Okay, that makes sense. Thank you.

Finance Director Blaze said \$500 to do the whole City.

Councilperson Trakas said I was really impressed by the way. You guys did a great job negotiating.

Finance Director Blaze said I pay way more than that just for my one person appraisal practice.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. Any other questions? We will move on then to Page 10, the Building Department.

Finance Director Blaze said I don't believe the Building Department is proposing too many labor related changes. The full-time wages are actually a little bit less than the approved to date for 2019; and the totals just up nominally by about \$20,000 total. The bulk of that for some reason being health insurance the way the Building Official calculated how it is.

Mayor Kurtz said if I may Mr. Vice Mayor, a couple things to be aware of. I talked earlier about building benches and making sure we have backup. We just brought on an inspector. I will say an inspector with credentials who has the capacity to grow into a Building Official's position. I say that because I am not saying that Mike's leaving, but I am saying he is sophisticated enough to be able to know that it's time. We prepare for the future just like the Chiefs and most of our Department Heads. So, I will review this one. We just brought him on; so the goal is to not only build our bench but also to have, you all are probably aware in some of the trades that you have to have certified inspectors. You have to have people who can play the role of a Building Official. We are blessed to have a good one, and someone with the credentials and the reputation and sophistication. We can't afford to lag behind in that and then be taken over by the State. So, I mention that because this is all new. I apologize for not making you aware of it. We will put that together Mr. Vice Mayor for next week, any changes.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. Any other questions regarding the Building Department?

We will move on to the Engineering Department, and I notice quite a bit of changes there. It's a pretty hefty increase in the wages. I believe that they are on tap for hiring a new Civil Engineer I believe.

Finance Director Blaze said I think the Mayor should articulate the vision that Don and the Mayor have collectively charted out for that department for 2021 and beyond.

Mayor Kurtz said Don and I had a very robust discussion; and Don if you want to elaborate just like we talked about, that's great.

City Engineer Ramm said sure Mayor, I would like. So, in looking at our current staffing, and we have all known for many years now we have been stretched and very thin and trying to accommodate the capacity of the work and the volume, the work that touches our hands in this department. I think we have done a good job with the limited staffing here, but we are at a point where we would definitely like to expand the staff to be able to be more responsive and more proactive and more emphasis on customer service. I think we just are challenged to just be able to cover all the bases. So, we do anticipate, we would love to bring on one full-time Civil Engineer, an experienced professional, licensed Engineer as well as one or two Engineering Technicians. The technicians can range in personnel from an Engineering graduate with less than four years of experience who is an EIT soon to become a PE. It could also range from and extend to a seasoned experienced individual who may not be certified or have any license per se, but is well experienced in the industry, be it construction or surveying or engineering field. So, I think a number of individuals and qualifications would be beneficial to have those persons in our department going forward.

Mayor Kurtz said to elaborate on what the Engineer said. We see there are multiple layers of certifications and qualifications from a Certified Engineer or PE such as Don to those who are certified and licensed in various disciplines to interns. Our goal is to take some of the money that we have been spending over the years in terms of our consultants, and I think Council asked us to do this a year ago to begin developing your team where we can do a lot of this in house. We will have the CRM, we will have a GIS to be able to gather data, refine data and have it available upon request. We are looking at a Sewer Division which would be an overlap between Engineering and Service that would be more responsive to storm sewer, sanitary sewer, those specific disciplines. So, in our discussion, we believe that we need to keep money in house and be able to have enough sophistication along with interns to be able to satisfy our customers' needs and be able to also have the capacity to respond to Council in terms of plans for the future and projects.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good, any questions?

Councilperson Trakas said I would just ask if it's possible Mayor and Don why don't we have a Utilities meeting in early December and go through your vision on this so we can fully comprehend what you want to accomplish here and maybe supplement the work of the Finance Committee.

Mayor Kurtz said that would be great. We would look forward to that, and Streets, we could combine maybe a Streets and Utilities and discuss them both because both are affected if that would be okay with both chairmans.

Vice Mayor Grendel said sure, Dale?

Councilperson Veverka said I have a question related to, I know a number of years ago there was a piece of property purchased on Pleasant Valley Road where a detention pond was placed. Where is the line item for something like that, for property purchase related to detention pond or flooding issue?

Finance Director Blaze said that would be in the Capital Budget Councilperson Veverka, and if you recall within the last couple of months I did make the proposal to Council, suggestion actually, that we start including a line on the Capital Plan for exactly what you just said, real estate acquisition.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think it's a great idea to have both meetings, Jim your Utilities as well as Streets & Sidewalks just to see what the inner workings, how the chain of command looks so this way we have an idea too if a complaint or issue comes up who is the person we can turn to for some answers and that. That would be a good opportunity in December to maybe or January, depending on how this operation is going to be run. So, we are able then also to inform the citizenry who they can call on certain problems too.

Councilperson Kapusta said I agree with your Vice Mayor. I would also like if we could during that meeting get a little bit of a historical perspective too. That would be beneficial to me I know because when it went from a consulting capacity or a contractual capacity for these services to in house; and now we are continuing to grow and develop. I would like to be able to get a better handle on what of our functionings have changed. I have heard you say like the Sewer Division Mayor and that would be great. That would be helpful.

Mayor Kurtz said absolutely. We will prepare to discuss that with both committees together and talk about our vision and some of the details that Don and Leon and I have been working through.

Vice Mayor Grendel said it would be informative to give Council kind of a flow sheet or that on how both of those departments now are going to be built and who is going to be responsible for what. It gives us a better understanding that we can have more intelligent questions for you Mayor. It's exciting that operationally, hopefully we are more efficient; and in the long run, we will be saving the City money by having a lot of in house work being done too.

Mayor Kurtz said again, we will do that; and I think it will be a good exercise to go through so everyone can benefit from that; and we can all be on the same page in terms of protocols we use to be able to be responsive to you and our constituents. We will put that together to make it easier.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. This might even be a good topic, we always have our January meeting; I don't know if we are going to do it virtually this year with the pandemic, but that would be a good topic to dive into as far as the restructure of both of those departments. Kathleen, you had a question.

Councilperson Kapusta said I was going to say that's where I was coming from as well as saying historical so we know that every year we allocate "x" amount of money for the different consultants, and now Don and the Mayor will be able to show us how we will be able to fold some of those functions into the new roles. I think that would be very beneficial.

Mayor Kurtz said absolutely. Don, we will just elaborate and put together, expound upon what we framed up the other day.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we have come a long way, my first tenure on Council I remember spending; it was almost like being a referee at a wrestling match between the Finance Department and Engineering Department on fees and everything else. It was uncomfortable for a lot of people. We have come a long way since then in the positive too because it was counterproductive and left a lot of hard feelings. I think what we have done here 12 or 13 years later is really commendable, and again it's fantastic to see how far we have come in this area. You have a lot to do with it Don because of the leadership you provide us and the Engineering Department.

Mayor Kurtz said just a little side bar, I think that Vern and I in 2008 we met with Don; and we made a quick decision. It's a good thing we did because he was being courted, I talked to several Mayors after he made the commitment to come on board. So, that transition from the outside to inside was a big step; but I think Dave earlier you reflected on challenges we were dealing with, it was definitely one of the best things we ever did was bringing Don on board.

Vice Mayor Grendel said oh most definitely Mayor. It seemed like Council was really spending an inordinate amount of time trying to settle disputes between John Veres and Don Elewski.

Mayor Kurtz said I remember when I came back in 2008, it was definitely a tender time for a lot of people.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think toxic is a good word.

Mayor Kurtz said I say tender, you say toxic.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked Don did you move to Independence when you became our Engineer?

Finance Director Blaze said he was already there.

Vice Mayor Grendel said it has been tremendous having your family live in town too which is a great thing because you are well invested too. To see this go to the next level Mayor that you are proposing, and Don you are proposing makes me feel good because I think we are making tremendous end roads for the City, and it's a very important department. Infrastructure is so important, and hopefully we are going, you are not going to find yourself down like when Hemlock Trail was going on and four or five big road projects and that. You will be well equipped to handle those kinds of situations.

Mayor Kurtz said and again I think it goes back to the initial discussion with building the bench and making sure that these Department Heads have time to focus on the future and strategy and not just always have to hold their hands on the wheel. That is one of the goals, the overall goals we are trying to accommodate. It's really difficult. I need your support. Don and I both need your support, Department Heads need your support because we are asking to allocate additional funds to be able to allow some of the Departments Heads like Don to be able to think more strategically and not have to always just hold the wheel.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good Mayor. Well I think that will be a great topic for our Strategic Planning meeting in January. It allows us on a Saturday or that to have three or four hours to discuss this. It will be a learning experience for us too, and you will be teaching us what your visions are in this area.

Mayor Kurtz said as long as I don't have to deal with another round of Covid, and it screw me all up that would be great.

Finance Director Blaze said 2021 will bring its own challenges.

Mayor Kurtz said you know what, I'm not complaining. I am just saying with these visions and plans and goals and aspirations, then you get a little flicker here and a turn here, and somehow you get through it all and you keep going.

Vice Mayor Grendel said yes.

Finance Director Blaze said it may be a good break point Vice Mayor here. It's almost 6:00 p.m.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good, and I think we have gotten through Page 10. Any other questions before we go, any other questions of Don or the Mayor or Vern regarding Engineering?

Vice Mayor Grendel said hearing none, then I think what we will do is we are scheduled for next Monday at 3:30 p.m., and we will pick up right with Page 11. Then Vern hopefully Leon will have a chance, and we can go back and do Service Department too.

Finance Director Blaze said we will threaten him that he's going to get a big goose egg if he doesn't.

Mayor Kurtz said he will be ready. Right now he's busy picking up leaves.

Councilperson Kapusta said thank you for the budget support sheet that helps to clarify our thoughts as we are going through this. So, thank you.

Finance Director Blaze said you are welcome, and it's just a start. I hope in the next three years to keep expanding on it and dialing it in a little bit more.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you Vern and Maggie, your team, I really appreciate your knowledge and willingness to share.

Vice Mayor Grendel said well excellent meeting, well done by everyone who contributed, Council and Vern, your office and the Mayor. Hopefully, we will get the appropriations pretty much handled at the next meeting. So, if you have questions on my committee and that, please have them ready for Vern. Then we will move on to the Five-Year Plan after that Vern.

Finance Director Blaze said excellent. Thank you everybody, nice job.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you Council and Department Heads.

Vice Mayor Grendel said everybody have a great evening and great week. We will see everybody next Monday again.

Moved by Veverka, seconded by Synek, to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting of November 17, 2020. Voice Vote: 3 yes/0 no; motion carried.

The Finance Committee meeting of November 17, 2020 was then adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

Debra J. Beal, Clerk of Council
Minutes Unapproved at Time of Release 11/19/20
