

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE
ECONOMIC GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
DECEMBER 1, 2020 1:00 P.M.
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM**

Present: Chairman Kenn Synek (left at 2:57 p.m.)
Vice Mayor Dave Grendel
Councilperson Kathleen Kapusta

Also Present: Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz
Councilperson Tom Narduzzi (left at 2:12 p.m.)
Councilperson Jim Trakas
Councilperson Dale Veverka
Councilperson Chris Walchanowicz
Finance Director Vern Blaze
Economic Development Director Jessica Hyser
Communications Director Alla Lora
Mike Lawrence, akhia communications
April Wonsick, akhia communications
Olivia Tormento, akhia communications
Jamie Gyeman, akhia communications
Cathy Fromet, Guide Studios

Chairman Kenn Synek called the Economic Growth & Development Committee meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

Welcome all. I see we have a number of special guests joining us today. I'm happy to see that. The main point of discussion being our branding and wayfinding initiative that the Economic Development Department is overseeing, and I think it's a good opportunity for Council to learn more about this initiative and this project.

My personal reflection or experience as I was preparing for this meeting is that frankly when this akhia proposal first came before Council, it struck me as a bit of a surprise insofar, and I am sorry to say it, I don't mean to offend anybody Jessica; but I know you have worked very hard on this. It's part of the side effects or the negative effects of this darn pandemic and this shutdown is the communication on this thing wasn't as good as it could have been. So, this meeting is certainly an opportunity for Council to learn a whole lot more about the branding initiatives, the opportunities that are before us; and I am certainly looking forward to that.

Again, the nature of I guess of the Economic Development Director's position is that you report mostly to the Mayor I think in my experience. The Mayor and people at City Hall hear about it directly and see it daily; but Council you know given the distance and Covid and all that sort of

stuff, we are just behind in the learning curve of all this going on. I am very happy to have this meeting to learn more about the important work that the department is doing.

The other thing that sort of came into my mind as I was going through this. When I look at our agendas for our monthly Council meetings, we get Directors' reports from lots of different Directors, but not the Economic Development Director; and I have only been on Council for not even a year yet, but I don't know if that's by accident or by design that there isn't that clear mechanism for communication between the Economic Development Director and Council. That's something I think we need to think about and work on.

Economic Development Director Hyser said I think we could talk about that a little bit off line. There's a lot of reasons why a lot of the stuff that I do isn't included in a report; and that's really because of public records and the sensitive nature of what I do.

Chairman Synek said granted, and I am not asking you to tell us the names of every company you ever met with that's thinking about moving to Independence, but by the same token, as we sit here today, Council really has no background on what is going on in the Economic Development Director position on a month to month basis; and again, it goes back to when I first saw this ordinance for akhia, it came as a surprise to me because I really didn't have any background of knowing that's going on.

Economic Development Director Hyser said we understand, and I think that Alla and I had wanted to give you guys a little bit more background; and we understand that these two initiatives are huge initiatives, and we should have provided you a little bit more background information prior to them being before Council and our previous meeting. So, I think that's kind of where we are coming from today.

In that regard, if you don't mind, do you want me to just start?

Chairman Synek said have at it.

Economic Development Director Hyser said so I kind of want to give everyone a little bit of background. Obviously, I came on board in June, and I bring with me 20 plus years of Economic Development experience with the last almost 12 years with another community in northeast Ohio. Both Alla and I being new to the City of Independence, kind of come into this role with a fresh set of eyes and are looking at things and what we see in terms of tools to move the City of Independence forward.

We sat down, Alla and I first when I came on board kind of looking at where Independence has been, and where we want to take it in the future. One of the things that we saw was that the disjointedness in our branding; and so with that we looked at the past RFP that was sent out in 2012 and some of the goals and initiatives that proposal was supposed to undertake and knew we needed to find or re-evaluate the partnership that we had with Fahlgren. With that we created an RFP, and we obviously talked to the Mayor and had his buy in on this process. So, we created an RFP, we reached out to a number of communications firms, kind of talking to them about how they might be able to partner with us to bring Independence into the future and to kind of deal

with some of the issues that we see going on. Obviously, the pandemic has changed the way anyone does business. The pandemic is putting us all into a digital world. We don't know when the end is. There's promising news with the vaccine, but how quickly that rolls out and to whom first is still yet to be determined.

So, again we sent out an RFP in the August timeframe with the deadline at the end of August. We received six responses. We interviewed all of those firms. You saw the evaluation sheets that both Alla and I and our notes that we took. Our goal is through the RFP is what do we need to move forward? Obviously, that will involve digital tools. Our website needs some enhancements, especially in the Economic Development side.

Having a consistent brand was something that we saw as a challenge. You see the yourIndependence, but how does that talk to people who are not familiar with Independence? That yourIndependence brand was something was developed as an economic development branding, but when you are trying to reach people who are not from Independence or not from northeast Ohio, it doesn't really have a connection to them. So, we are looking for a partner to help us there as well as other digital tools. As I mentioned before, our website is something we saw as a gateway. We know that site selectors use our website as the first place to evaluate the credibility of our community, but what else can we use digitally to reach out to other audiences? Then also other digital tools, how can we move that forward? So, when we were evaluating companies, there were a couple of top contenders. One of them in terms of branding and marketing was akhia.

Another area that we saw as a possibility to enhance our City and kind of make it stand out from our competition was wayfinding. So, we have akhia communications to help us on the branding side, and we have their team here on the phone with us. April Wonsick is the Vice President. I will turn it over to April as soon as I am finished.

Then we have Cathy Fromet from Guide Studio who is really an expert in her field in terms of wayfinding and placemaking; and it's really a unique niche that she has carved out. Alla and I when we were looking at this, we were looking at how do we set Independence apart from our competitors? How do we differentiate us from Westlake? How do we differentiate us from Beachwood? We have Valor Acres in Brecksville that's going to be coming on line in the near future. How do we make ourselves look different from Brecksville? We believe that by doing a branding initiative as well as a placemaking wayfinding initiative to help people navigate through our City and mark our borders, that we will differentiate ourselves from our competition.

Those are the two big concepts. I know that they are really big concepts, and we didn't provide you enough up front information the first time around, but I think having the information that we have supplemented over the last month as well as having these experts on the phone will help clarify some of what we are trying to accomplish.

So, April I am going to turn it over to you and the akhia team to go through the information that you have prepared.

April Wonsick said that's good. Thank you Jessica. Thank you Alla. Thank you Mayor, Vice Mayor, Council, we are really happy to be here today and excited to have the time with you today to share more about our proposal and how we would approach a rebrand or an opportunity to help the City of Independence move forward in attracting more businesses and retaining the businesses that are currently here.

We will do just a very quick introduction so you know who you are speaking to, and then it will come back to me. Just to start, I am April Wonsick. As Jessica mentioned, I am Executive Vice President at akhia which means I get the opportunity to oversee all of our services and all of the accounts that we manage and work with very closely with our clients in setting strategy and ensuring that the quality of the work is strong and that the health of the agency/client relationship is strong as well. I have been with the agency 9 years, but have more than 20 years of experience behind me working with municipalities, businesses, non-profit organizations, all from a marketing and communication standpoint. So, I am looking forward to spending some time with you today. I will turn it over to Olivia, and we will do quick introductions, and then we can bring it back to me.

Olivia Tormento said hi everyone. I am an Account Supervisor at akhia, so I sit within the Client Service Department and drive strategy and brand for our biggest clients. I have been at the agency about 11 years, and I am really excited to be here today and thank you for the opportunity.

Mike Lawrence said I am a Creative Director at akhia. I have been here 7 years, I have been in marketing for about 20 years. It's a joy every day to come into work, whether it's my home or whether it's at the office because I am working with great people and some great clients. I come from a writing background. I have been in advertising marketing a couple of decades. I started as a copywriter and just got my way kicked upstairs enough times to get the role I have now; but at akhia in addition to working on a lot of different clients. I helped lead our visual communications, like a Creative Department in addition to our contact team as well. So, I have seen both the visual and the words as well working together. We get our hands dirty, and it is a lot of fun. Thanks for having us today.

Jamie Gyerman said I am Director of Channel Strategy at akhia. I work directly with our clients to help determine what the right communication channels are to connect with your target audiences and determine what that mix is and the right source of content in creative that needs to get served to them through those channels. I have been at akhia for almost 5 years, but on the agency side for about 20 years and also very excited to see all of you and to talk a little bit more about the proposal that we put together. Thank you again for having us.

Ms. Wonsick said one thing that was clear from the minute we received the RFP is just having a real excitement for the opportunity that is ahead of all of you. We see the City of Independence as a sought after destination for businesses, entertainment, dining, exploring, so much more. It's really a hub of activity for those who live and work in the City, but also with that kind of location that you have, you're really a prime location and a destination for those who live outside of the City, those coming from the north, south, east or west. As we started working on our proposal to share with you, it became clear that all of us had very different reasons that we love

visiting the City of Independence and getting to know more about the City through conversations with Jessica, Alla, the Mayor and others to really open up our eyes even more to what is in front of you.

What we are seeing, and you kind of eluded to it in some of the conversations before this meeting, this is a year when we have learned to expect the unexpected; and we see the City being at a tipping point where there's an opportunity to build on momentum and the many successes that have led the City to where it is today. There's also an opportunity to be, making some simple shifts that will allow the City to continue to meet and exceed the evolving needs of a business community that is really facing challenges that they have never seen before. We have been saying from day one that we don't see this as an overhaul of the City's brand. We don't want it to no longer feel familiar, but really be more of an opportunity to pivot. That would be a better reflect a vibrant destination for businesses. We see this as a way to solidify the City's brand and create a position that will impact the City for the foreseeable future.

In our roles, we have been very fortunate to lead communication efforts for other municipalities in northeast Ohio who, in many ways, are facing similar, although not equal business challenges. Over the years we have worked on developing branding and communication programs for the City of Hudson, the City of Green, plus local community engagement from northeast Ohio for companies like GE Lighting, Akron Children's Hospital and numerous non-profit organizations. Through that work we are often hearing similar questions that we have been asked to help answer and help solve those challenges to kind of what we have been hearing from the City of Independence as well. So, things like how do you breathe new life into an existing brand? How do you reach and deepen engagement with a diverse set of key audiences? How do you find ways to strengthen those existing communication channels so that the messages that you are trying to deliver to your key audiences are actually being reached and are being heard and being delivered in a meaningful way?

The good news is we have seen what's possible when cities and organizations proactively take steps and make some decisions to shift to meet the needs of their constituents or their customers or the business community or whoever those key stakeholders might be, and we are really excited to be talking with you today about the possibility of us partnering together to help the City of Independence move forward in this way. So, with that in mind, I will turn it over to Olivia who will start to walk us through some of our approach around brand strategy development, some relevant examples and then just a recommended approach for how we would see us getting started working together.

Olivia Tormento said we will dive in. We have a few slides to go through, but I encourage anyone who has a question; I know there is some time afterwards, but if you wanted to interject and ask a question or make a comment, feel free to. Like April said before, the business landscape and our economy obviously has changed drastically. Covid has changed everyone's lives, and I think everyone can obviously relate to it as a consumer but also as business professionals. So, from a consumer perspective, behavior is drastically changing. We know that us alone are making way more purchases online. Maybe some people are getting groceries delivered, a lot of Independence restaurants, we are ordering take out versus dining as they had before. All of this behavior shift is causing businesses to have to rethink their physical

environments and their brand in general. So, obviously the places that are open for business are rethinking their physical distancing measures, taking health precautions. Restaurants that reopened back in May and June have had to take drastic hits and also just reconfigure their entire spaces to make it safe and accommodating for people who were coming in.

Then those who were coming to the office, those spaces need to be rethought out or maybe even completely shifted. So, akhia is an example. Our home is in Hudson. Right now we are all over northeast Ohio, and that has been the case since March 13th.

I think one of the things that is most interesting is a lot of researchers are saying that none of this is changing any time soon. So, even though the pandemic has changed our behavior, it's not necessarily going to go back. They think that it's only accelerated our behavior. So, a lot of the trends that we are seeing, Zoom meetings, working from home; those are things that were potentially going to be happening in five or ten years down the road. Covid-19 made it happen this year because it had to.

Because of all of this, we know that the world won't be the same in 2021 and beyond. None of us know exactly what's ahead of us; but we do know that we need to be prepared. We need to help businesses that are in Independence feel supported, feel like Independence is there with them every step of the way, whether the vaccine is turned around and in place tomorrow for us, or is another year ahead. We are going to be there along with them and help them succeed in the environment that they have to work in.

I think some business shifts are obvious, some of them not as much. What businesses needed before are definitely not what they need moving forward. For example, Independence may have flown brokers in, wined and dined them. You guys have a lot of great restaurants and places to experience so that they could get a feel for the City, know what they were considering moving their business to and really experience it in person. Now a lot of businesses are not flying or even driving their employees in. So, we have to shift to virtual resources. How can they experience that city, the different places to eat, explore, shop, all within the comforts of their own home or their home office, wherever they may be.

One of my favorite things at akhia 9 plus months ago, was to go to those luncheons that associations were putting on, networking and meeting other industry professionals, people within the area, mingled, learned about something new from an expert. Now we are all looking for online resources, webinars to take, online networking opportunities that give us that option to experience what we may have experienced, but just from a virtual environment again.

Other businesses, even though some of them are still looking to drive more foot traffic to their physical locations, businesses are moving to hotel modeling, reconfiguring office designs. They are looking for guidance and leadership on technology that enable them to maybe use their office location as a hub but really give their employees a seamless experience from work from home, their customers that same experience, all while people are in different locations.

So, businesses are happening. They are not going anywhere anytime soon, and we have to stay ahead of it in order to keep businesses here and also continue to bring new businesses into Independence.

Jamie Gyerman said so as we think about all those different shifts from a business standpoint but also the behavioral shifts with consumers, it's really important for us to kind of take a step back and look at all of the different audiences that would be impacted by this and how we want to go out and have conversations with them that are going to resonate and allow us to continue to evolve and amplify what the City of Independence has to offer. We know that the City has so many progressive businesses and entrepreneurs and families, the restaurants and world class healthcare. You guys are housing facilities across every single industry. It's been such an amazing experience, and now it's really an opportunity for us to think about how we can still stay connected to those individuals and continue to kind of evolve into the next phase of what is going to be necessary and relevant for each of those different audiences. This is where there's that opportunity to really think through what that brand looks like. What the City of Independence brand is going to be, not just from a visual identity, but the voice, the tone, the communication that will be going out to all of those different groups. As we think through how much has changed when it comes again to the way that people are consuming information and connecting with others, it's really important for us to understand what are the right channels that we are going to need to connect with all of those different audiences, and when doing so, doing it in a consistent way that is going to sound like it's coming from one entity and really showcasing all that the City has to offer based on who it is that we are talking and making sure that those messages are relevant to them.

We do that by really thinking through a holistic strategy, and again that's something that needs to happen across multiple channels; but before we can do that, we really want to make sure that there is a strong alignment on the brand itself. Again, as we have all mentioned, and you guys are very aware that the City of Independence has a great reputation; but we have to figure out the right way to shift who we are as a brand in order to move forward with the changing dynamics, not just from Covid but just the overall evolution of how we are consuming content, how we need to communicate with all these different entities and how to connect with individuals.

So, again as we think about a brand, it's more than just that visual identity. It's really the anchor of what you stand for, who you are and what that message is that you want to convey to your target audiences; and by really defining what that is, it allows a brand, whether it's a city or a business or an individual to have that consistent message that is going to go out to whoever is they are speaking to. It allows you to create that recognition, to reinforce who you are, reinforce that message by having that consistency through the same look, the same feel and the same voice of those different messages. We know that you guys already have such a strong identity and are very well loved by your residents and businesses; but what we need to do now is really start to bump up the communications into how we connect with all of those different audiences no matter what is going on in the world, no matter what is going on in the economic or business environment and that's where developing that strong brand is really going to come into play and allow us to create that consistency across all those different channels that we can use to communicate and connect with those audiences.

Mr. Lawrence said we are going to spend a couple more slides just looking closer at brand and having a discussion there and looking at it a little deeper than just what it looks like or feels like but what it is that it is communicating. What more is there to it. It would say your brand is more than a logo, well sometimes a logo is more than a logo. Looking at the two of these here, first look let's think identification. What's the logo on the left? It's Lego. You ask them why they know that, they will tell you well the word Lego, it's pretty obvious.

The logo on the right, you ask them what that logo is, and they will tell you Nike even though it doesn't say Nike anywhere on the logo. So, the matter of the equity that is built into it; so you have identification, I know who you are by looking at in this case a logo; but then further, the equity behind it. What do I understand what that logo really means? A lot is happening at one time. It's identification, it's equity, it's good design, it's communicating the meaning behind your brand; and a logo is just one part of it, but it's a way to kick off this conversation.

Just real quick, if we pulled out here, there are similar themes to Lego and Nike. It's diversionary. It's activity, but they are very different in the types of activity that they are. Lego, it's play, it's childhood, it's colors, it's construction, it's stepping on them in your bare feet and screaming out in pain every once in a while.

Nike, it's not so much play, it's working out. It's pushing yourself. It's getting in shape. The pain you feel from a workout is much different than you get from stepping on a Lego here; but you can see where it comes together.

To that end, you brand them as more than a logo. This is where the conversation continues. We say Lego, people say play. Nike equals sport. More than that, think of the equity that they are leveraging here over time, and look at how they evolved which we will talk about in a minute. With Lego and play, it's creation of worlds. It's construction. You think Lego, you see the logo, it makes a lot of sense.

With Nike, it's pushing yourself, but it's also a funny looking logo. It's not the best designed logo, but a lot of work went into helping us through the years understand what it means, what they are driving at and how they are a little different, not just from Lego but it may be also from the Reeboks and the Converse of the world. It's how we talk about the branding, and it shows that the brand is a lot more important. There's a lot more to it than what you are looking at, and where this conversation is why is branding so darn complicated once in a while, and this why. There's all this thinking that goes into it. So, it's important to think in terms of brand beyond just does this logo look nice? What is it communicating? I would say if you think that to be the Lego logo. It's a nice looking logo.

Now think of the FedEx logo. You have seen the FedEx logo before. If you close, has anyone ever seen the arrow that is hidden in the FedEx logo? Well it is there. It's a great looking logo, but it wouldn't make sense for Lego to have the FedEx logo if you know what I mean. It's a nice design, well done, but it doesn't make sense for the brand. So, when we go back, and we are thinking of branding, we are not just thinking of something that looks really nice; we are also thinking of something that has the proper meaning to a firm what your brand, what your City stands for, looks, feels and sounds.

There's more to it than that. It's the idea of a brand evolving with the times. In this case, we pulled out Pepsi because I'm sure we have all had a Pepsi, Coke whatever it may be; but you can see over the last hundred some years the evolution that Pepsi as a brand underwent to go from product centric to you look at it what it has become now, it's less the product and it's more an attitude, a feel. It's refreshing. It's red, white and blue. It's freedom. It's that sort of thing.

If we look through these bit by bit, this evolution, it does show that maybe every few years, maybe every couple of decades, it's necessary to once in a while push your brand, nudge your brand, lock it in and maximize its meaning or change it a lot. You can see if Pepsi Cola kept the logo from 1898, I am not sure many people would be buying the product today. You can also, as you look through these, get an understanding of well why is it that they changed. You can almost build a story out of it. If you go to the one in 1906, they added a call to action in the logo, drink Pepsi Cola. We are further defining what it is to do with this product. By 1940 I think people understood this is a liquid, we don't need that anymore. 1950 the logo becomes a bottle cap. Why a bottle cap? Well we could surmise by then they were one of the big two, along with Coca Cola. Coca Cola, they commandeered the bottle as their brand. So, Pepsi in response, we are going to use the bottle cap; that's going to be our little logo there. Then you see through the years, you go to 1973, everybody understands we scrapped the cap, and we just move on and we are changing it, less of an obligation but more to refresh with the times. I think for some of us it reflects, there are some favorites that might reflect where we grew up. For me the 1973 logo is my favorite. It's the one I remember as a kid; but you can see with time they removed the word Pepsi but they kept some of things that they always had, the color, the red and then the red, white and blue that stands for the All American. There is a little bit of motion to it as well with the little bit of waves. The bigger point to that is just that things evolve, but they evolved in the right way. Other companies didn't evolve in the right way. Either they got stuck in old ways like Kodak and IBM, Blackberry or My Space, or they just missed a chance to evolve properly.

The City of Detroit, they not so much rested on their laurels, but as times changed and as economic things change; and being the car makers that they are, things change; but they didn't change fast enough. J.C. Penney is another one, it's a very successful company; but if you are still doing similar type things, or even if you don't change a little bit in the right way, it can spell a little bit of trouble. I know that I can go on and on, and it probably feels like I have gone on and on; but the bigger point is to say that there's a lot to the branding and there's a lot that we think of when we go into it to make sure that it works right. It affirms the meaning and what people expect of your community; but it's also enhancing those finer points of your community as well for businesses and residents.

Ms. Gyerman said thanks Mike. Before we move on, I think I saw someone with their hand up. Did someone have a question?

Councilperson Veverka said I do. Up to this point, if you were doing the presentation, and we were sitting in a board room, that would be very helpful; but I guess my question is would there be some City logos that would kind of point out to us what their branding is, either you may have worked with or that are out there?

Mr. Lawrence said absolutely. I think there's a couple that would be coming up.

Ms. Gyerman said that's actually a perfect segway. These two on this slide aren't cities, but the next slide does have two of them. We wanted to show just a couple of examples of brands that akhia has worked with to transform the brand in one way or another. Really quick, Middough is a company that I got the pleasure of working with. They are an architectural project management and design firm in Cleveland, but they are international. One of their issues, and I think it kind of aligns nicely to Independence is that they had a bunch of different entities all over the United States in particular, but also all over the world. They weren't looking the same, sounding the same, there were some big customers that they had that would interact with several of those Middough locations and get completely different experiences from them. So, they called on akhia to kind of bring them together, and what we did here actually, we didn't really adjust their logo at all. I think we updated it just a smidge, but that really wasn't the primary strategy that we used. In fact, I think customers could probably say, some of them didn't even notice that the logo was touched. What we did was we brought the cohesive brand around Middough. So, we put together brand guidelines to (inaudible) the internal teams to gain alignment with everyone and make sure that everyone was saying and speaking the same language no matter where people interacted with Middough.

So, internal alignment before we launched externally the new refreshed brand voice. So, that meant that no matter what entity, no matter where someone was calling in, whether it was Middough in Texas, Middough in Asia, they were getting the same type of experience, same type of treatment as a customer that they could grow comfortable with and get acquainted with. They knew they were speaking to Middough or interacting with Middough, no matter what channel they went through. I know that's something that Independence definitely wants to do moving forward with all your different entities. You would have to run logos through those different entities, making sure they are all speaking from one voice that people know they are interacting with Independence. They come to expect and learn and know what you guys are going to be there for them.

Ms. Tormento asked April do you just want to skip to the two cities before we move on?

Ms. Wonsick said absolutely. I am happy to do that.

Ms. Tormento said so we do have two examples here of what we have done with the City of Green and the City of Hudson. I will speak to the City of Green first. So, the City of Green is in the middle of a major two year infrastructure improvement project to add more roundabouts in a major corridor along Massillon Road that runs through the heart of the city and turned to our agency to help partner a communications program around that which would really focus on how we are communicating, what these improvements mean to both businesses and residents and those who are traveling in and out of the city as well as the construction progress and the timelines that there was consistent and continuous communication during the duration of those two years.

One of our recommendations in working with the City of Green was right off the bat to brand the project to give it an ownable and recognizable identity so that in all of the communications that were going out to businesses or residents, whether that was through e-mail, on the website, on social media, print materials, their printed newsletters, there was a consistent look and feel,

consistent messaging for how we were talking about this project that would be in the works for two years.

We were also tasked with developing specific (inaudible) that would speak to their points for the audiences. A business located along the corridor has very different concerns than maybe a resident who doesn't live near that particular area of the city, so we would still need to speak to both of those audiences in a way that would mean something to them and actually deliver a message that matters. You will see here just kind of a sampling of some of the way that the brand came to life. We have seen through year one of working through this project some initial positive results. In the first few months of construction, the city was reporting largely what we would consider neutral/positive feedback about the project. So, because we were proactive in our communications and consistent in our communications, everyone understood right away when they saw something about the project that it was about the Massillon Road border improvement. It kind of helped maybe ease any confusion about what might be happening in that particular area of the city. We were also able to point to some success rates in terms of e-mails that were opened. We were able to track that those were getting opened at a much higher rate than maybe other e-mails sent out on behalf of the city and social media engagement about the project was also creating neutral and remains pretty neutral/positive when compared maybe to other projects that have been launched within the city.

If you kind of look to the other side of your screen, this is a project with the City of Hudson where we asked to come in and help brand a new initiative that the city was launching. This was a program called Velocity Broadband which was allowing the City of Hudson to become a high speed fiber optic broadband service provider, and the first gigabyte community in the country, definitely in the State of Ohio. So, our task here was to develop a brand for this new program that again would be easily recognized by both residents and businesses in the city when they would see any of the communications about the project.

The goal of this program was to both attract and maintain businesses by offering this gigabyte city option for businesses to tap into this network for broadband service. They had a three year sign up goal, and we were very excited and pleased to see that they met that three year goal in year one. They are attributing a lot of that success to the fact that the communications program was pretty aggressive and again very consistent in how we were talking to residents and businesses. I think some of the keys to success for this branding program was really understanding our audiences. So, part of that was doing some town hall meetings where we could get real feedback from businesses and residents and understanding their pain points and making sure that we were doing our research to understand what it is that they most needed. We weren't just putting out a program because it made sense for the City of Hudson. We were putting out a program that really would make sense for the businesses and residents who reside there.

The other key to success here was just finding very creative ways to make it ownable and memorable and really capture attention, and we did that through a number of ways, some traditional marketing but also trying to take that brand and that message and capture attention in different ways. You will see a picture there of the iconic clock tower in downtown Hudson. We were actually able to project some of the messaging in lights and start to build some excitement

and some intrigue around what was going to be coming into the City of Hudson so that there could start to be some buzz in the community for what this announcement would be.

I think maybe a third key to success is really looking at how are we able to successfully, and I say this is true with the City of Green as well as the City of Hudson, is knowing that municipalities have fixed budgets; and we want to make sure that the work we are delivering is on budget and on timeline and understanding the necessary approval processes and the decision makers involved in making sure we are always working to deliver a program that's going to make sense in every aspect for the City in terms of what you are trying accomplish in your goals and objectives, but also understanding what those fixed costs are and being very responsible and accountable to working within those budgets and delivering some program back that would help you meet those goals and objectives.

Any other questions before we walk through our recommended approach?

Ms. Tormento said I know Jess we are probably coming up on time here. This isn't anything that we didn't have in a former presentation; but we would ground our plan and research. We plan on talking to the different businesses that are in Independence, making sure we are well versed in their needs and understanding what they need and how Covid has impacted them but also what they are looking for moving forward. We would work through that brand facelift, that might be a facelift of the current logo and also make sure we have comprehensive guidelines so that no matter what entity within Independence is communicating to the audience, that it comes from the same look, feel, voice and everyone knows who they are receiving communication from.

We would then move into a web update; so knowing that your site obviously the first place that people go, and it was even before the pandemic, but now even more so. We would make sure to work through, identify those pages that are most visited by people, especially in the Economic Development section and give those and make sure those match up with the refreshed brand in new ways and make them consistent and make it a good experience for people who are going there as a hub for information.

We would update your communications materials. Jess has said that there are needs for fact sheets and letterhead template and business cards; and those all need to look and feel the same and reflect the work that we would be doing with the new brand. Then coming out of that, akhia is really well rounded in a three months approach. So, quarterly even more so, more often if we needed to, we would do a pause and learn; and if we were learning that something was or wasn't working, or a shift was needed in budget to put something more toward a different project, we are going to be learning as we go, researching, making sure that people who are affected by these communication changes are feeling like they are getting what they needed, businesses are getting what they needed from Independence and use that to develop a strategic plan for Phase 2 that would take us into the new year.

So, this is our approach at a birds' eye view. Everything was in more detail in the presentation that Jess had shared with you; and I don't know if you have any questions now or if we wanted to move to the next section, but that is the conclusion.

Councilperson Trakas said thanks for being on board everybody and nice presentation. Just out of curiosity going back to some of the communities that you have worked with. Obviously, our focus here is on economic development and job creation and job retention. I can understand branding and having communications. How did that relate with respect to job creation and/or retention or creation? What's the strategy around that? Would you be the people who would be doing like the LinkedIn and social media and those types of things? Is that the vision?

Economic Development Director Hyser said we would ask them for some guidance on that, but we would like to bring some of our social media work in house. In terms of job creation, attraction, retention, some of that comes in with the marketing plan. One of the things that akhia has proposed is really focusing on some digital assets. In the proposal you will see that they talked about creating a digital showroom. So, that was one of their creative ideas. Obviously, our website, and if you talk to any site locator, the first place that they go is the city's website. That is the place where they look about for information about our community and how we compare to others. So, this would be a place where we would have some tools that would help site locators or brokers either market their properties or learn more about our City.

Ms. Tormento said just to add to that, again where the akhia team would come in to assist is helping to determine what some of those key goals are up front and creating the consistent message that Jessica's team could then use to share across the different channels. So, once that's done, that makes things a bit easier to kind of pick off and disperse rather than having to start from scratch each time we want to communicate, whether it's around job creation or bringing in new businesses, but once you have those messages established that have been created based on what we know is important to those audiences, we provide those to the team so that they can push them out across the proper channels.

Chairman Synek asked any other questions, comments, concerns? Yes, Councilperson Veverka.

Councilperson Veverka said well I'm looking at the logo for Green, and I see the most predominant thing is a number on there. Is that more targeted toward a project? Help me out here.

Ms. Tormento said that's a good question, and that number is there by design. So 241 is the State route that runs through the corridor, it's State route 241. So, that was something that is widely known within the City of Green. We wanted to place that very prominently for easy identification. It also allows, while we are working on the north end of the project, right now there's opportunity to extend and work on the south end. So, that gives that logo and that brand some longevity so that it can speak to the entire corridor project not just the Phase 1 that's underway at this time.

Councilperson Veverka asked now does that logo then go on paperwork and everything else for the city?

Ms. Tormento said it does as it pertains to this particular project. So, what we will do in many of the materials, and it's hard to see in this example here; but we would pair this project logo with the actual City of Green logo. So, part of the development of this logo was to make sure it was

complementing and very complementary to what the City of Green already has in terms of brand. We didn't want this to look so different that it felt jarring. It had to very much complement and be a part of what the City of Green's existing logo that they are using on letterhead and other marketing materials; this would accompany that when we are speaking to any updates or any communications specific to the construction project.

Mayor Kurtz said so we would have a 21 on ours if we wanted to focus on the Route 21 downtown area; but I am intrigued by the fact that you make it very clear when you see Velocity Broadband Hudson. You know what they are trying to achieve with that, and I thought you said something about shoring with your tools and resources and creating that new opportunity for our commercial. The focus of this is the commercial business community, correct?

Ms. Tormento said yes, absolutely. So, we put this plan around specifically. We know that obviously residents are very important, but it's been made clear to us that they know and love Independence and aren't going anywhere. They are already kind of cemented in and it's really businesses right now who are needing that extra support, not only right now but moving forward. For businesses that are currently in Independence, but also attracting more to the City in the future.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you.

Councilperson Veverka said Mr. Chairman.

Mayor Kurtz said go ahead Dale.

Councilperson Veverka said I guess the other thing I had then is that I know this is something that Tom brought up in an earlier meeting, is how exactly is this measurable? In other words, we invest in moving this direction, what's the way we measure the success of the program.

Ms. Tormento said so there are many different ways that we can measure the success of the program. One of the ways, no matter what akhia does, every single tactic, every single communications piece will have goals behind them and measurements taken. So, whether it's quarterly, monthly, it depends on each of our clients' needs; but we would put together a recommendation, a plan with goals and then measure against that as we go forward. So, whether that's sentiment, surveys or engagement within the communications pieces that we are putting together; those would be determined as we put the plan in place, and like I said, measured on a regular basis to make sure we are moving forward in the right direction. If we are not, that's when we would do that pause and learn and make sure that we are shifting according to what everyone wants.

Mayor Kurtz said Olivia, you are saying that we would be in a position to disseminate information on a more real time basis with members of Council through the Economic Development Department, you would put us in a position where we could share information in somewhat real time and give us the feedback you are getting so that we can adapt, adjust and move quickly to change our strategy if necessary, correct?

Ms. Wonsick replied correct. Yes, akhia is very much a believer that every business plan has to measure up to business goals, not just marketing goals. Marketing is only there to support the organization and business as a whole; so we would make sure that we were sharing everything we were learning. We do that daily with our clients. So, whatever cadence you needed, we would adapt to that and share that our plan was (inaudible) up. We would want to make sure we were working with Jessica and the team, whoever else would make up that team to identify what are those goals that are important. We have some clients it's really important for them to see that they are keeping and attracting people to their website; and so we are going to make sure that we are focusing more on developing content that will give people a reason to come our website. So, then we can measure how many people have been to the site, how long they are staying on the site. For some clients it's really important that they see an increase in sales, or in this case it would be an increase in inquiry base perhaps from you know new businesses wanting to learn more about the City of Independence. That might be a metric that we decide; but it's really going to be a collaboration with Jessica and the team to identify what are those key metrics, and then we can start to put a plan in place for how we would measure those and report on those.

Mayor Kurtz asked so once you are seeing these new customers, potential business customers, looking at the City, we are able to take that information and then with the Economic Development Department, reach out to those potential customers and see what other support we could give them?

Ms. Wonsick said yes. That's a great example. If we are able to establish some way to track who is coming into your website; maybe we are getting leads, sales calls, inquiries into the website, e-mails, those would be things that would trigger maybe a follow up and a way for us to start to measure the effectiveness of the effort.

Mayor Kurtz said so if I'm understanding, instead of just waiting for customers to come and wait for them to open our door; through this mechanism that we are going to create in this new strategy, we are going to be able to respond, react, adjust; and you will be able to measure that.

Ms. Wonsick said exactly, and we know that it's not a quick process for someone to express interest and make the decision to move their business into a new location. One of the things that we do is we set up different kind of trackers along the way to show how we are slowly moving people or ushering people to that inquiry or final decision to place their business within the City of Independence. So, some of those things could look like is the message resonating with those audiences? Did they express or show interest? By measuring that, it allows us early on to see if we have the right messages out there or if we need to maybe make a shift. We will show you that movement along the way so that you are not having to wait until it's too late to maybe make a change or a shift.

Mayor Kurtz asked am I getting ahead by asking you what the timeframe for all of this based on your experience?

Ms. Tormento said the original timeline that we had for putting it in front of Jessica and Alla was probably four to six months for this first phase. We can work pretty quickly. I think akhia is

known for working pretty nimbly, and as soon as we got the go ahead, we would start the research phase and map out the rest of the phases; but I would say four to six months.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you Mr. Chairman.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I noticed the legislation, the amount of the contract is for \$76,185; is that for Phase 1 or does that incorporate going from Phase 1 to Phase 2? What is the scope of what we are paying for in this legislation?

Ms. Tormento said so the first scope is this entire recommended approach including the plan for Phase 2. It's not Phase 2 because we don't necessarily know what Phase 2 would be and what to recommend for that, but it would include the planning and prioritization of it.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I see, and the other question I have is that I know we are hoping to initiate a project for the downtown area. This contract here is for the branding for the City in its entirety. Would your services include branching out like you do with Green and Hudson, those are particular projects there; and we anticipate that we are going to have one, maybe two projects if something happens with the northwest quadrant or the Cloverleaf. Would your ongoing work include branching out and making our brand fit to what we are trying to do in other areas?

Ms. Tormento said absolutely. Those are two major initiatives that you are working on in the next year, that's something that absolutely should be included in this because that's a part of your brand and major things that you are going to be focusing on. So, we would absolutely work that into our plan and make sure that there were measurable goals.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good. Mayor and Jess, I think that's what we have to look at if we are looking down the road and hoping to get a project going with the downtown area finally and to incorporate all that one uniform, that brand should fit and be able to grow with different things that we are trying to accomplish here.

Economic Development Director Hyser said absolutely.

Mayor Kurtz said Mr. Chairman, it's my understanding that by doing the research, and it's going to allow us the flexibility to branch off into these specialized projects in a more a timely and real time basis. Is that a fair assessment?

Economic Development Director Hyser said yes.

Chairman Synek said I see there's a question from a participant asking akhia's experience with cities beyond Hudson and/or the City of Green. Have you worked with other municipalities or governmental agencies.

Ms. Wonsick said those are the two primary. We have worked with the City of Hudson for probably close to seven or eight years. The City of Green is within the last year. Through some of our other clients, we have had opportunities to work with local communities, so Akron Children's is a great example. We were involved in a program that worked with all of the cities

where they have some sort of presence, whether that's a satellite office, a hospital system or celebrating their 125th anniversary. So, we coordinated with the city departments in each of those cities, and I believe there are probably 12 or 15 to do a community outreach communications program around the 125th anniversary of the hospital. So, a little bit different type of experience, but working with municipalities in terms of bringing them into the fold for a community celebration.

Councilperson Kapusta said it was an interesting presentation. I have a related question. Since it wouldn't appear then that municipalities are your top group that you work with, what is your major focus? In what areas have you primarily worked please?

Ms. Wonsick said we have strong business to business client offering a lot in terms of manufacturing in a lot of companies, global companies that are headquartered here in northeast Ohio. The interesting thing about that experience that has been able to be applied to our work with municipalities is understanding what businesses are facing on a global scale as well as a local, regional scale. The communications strategy is very much the same. Our approach is very much the same, and we can apply that to the work with municipalities in a sense that we are looking to understand what is that business challenge? What is it that you are trying to accomplish and how can communications and marketing help you solve that business challenge? So, while we don't have a lot of municipality specific experience beyond Hudson and Green, the approach that we take with our clients, especially on the b to b side, and understanding complex audiences, understanding what is their business challenge and the communications strategy that would help them reach that.

Councilperson Kapusta said thank you.

Chairman Synek asked any other questions for akhia?

Economic Development Director Hyser said thank you akhia team. I think that, unless Kenn you want to interject, I was just going to invite our friends from Guide Studio.

Chairman Synek said very well, that sounds good.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you akhia.

Economic Development Director Hyser said so the second group is Cathy Fromet with Guide Studio. We came in contact with Guide Studio as a result of the RFP process. The interesting thing about Guide Studio is they do have niche work in placemaking and wayfinding; and when we look at Independence, that's one thing that would help differentiate from our neighboring communities, being able to when you hit our City border, know that you are actually in the City of Independence as well as making it easier to navigate around our community. One of the challenges that I think I have had is, even as a lifelong resident of Independence, is sometimes finding my way around. I could only imagine the struggles that some of our business community is having. In fact, I have had a conversation with some of our businesses who have a difficult time navigating their customers to their doorstep. If that continues, it's going to be a reason for

these businesses to leave our City. Of course, when they leave their City, they also take their tax dollars with them.

So, I would like to introduce you to Cathy Fromet. I think she has some great information to share with you.

Cathy Fromet said good afternoon everybody. Thank you for allowing us to kind of explain really how the signage and wayfinding and placemaking piece actually wraps really nicely with what you are trying to do in terms of refreshing your brand and using that as a tool.

Just to give you some background on who we are as Guide. We have actually been around for well over 20 years. Our name previously was Studio Graphique. Several years ago we changed our name. We rebranded to position ourselves more strongly with the type of work that we do which is working with communities and public places to use branding and communication tools to attract, engage and strengthen investment in place.

The way that we look at wayfinding, it is a direct part of your brand. Based on what akhia was talking about, your brand defines your advantage as a community; and it also makes a promise. When you make that type of promise, you also have to keep that promise. So, as they discussed communications and marketing; those are some of the tools that are used to help a community keep those promises, but what's unique to places is that the experience people have within your community also keeps that promise. That is where wayfinding is a unique tool that you have to your advantage. It's not necessarily used by some types of businesses, but obviously it's used by businesses that are frequented by people.

As we think about wayfinding, there is a practical purpose of wayfinding. Obviously, to tell people where they are and where they need to go; but it really is a critical component to develop positive experiences that people actually have with your place. A well developed wayfinding system signals that something is happening, and it really is a catalyst for community pride and image.

The one thing I want to emphasize is that wayfinding is not, obviously we believe that people who live within your community, who are part of your community, on a complete daily basis, like from morning, noon and night. They will benefit from seeing the image presented in a unique way within their community; but Independence is different. You have a population increase that's three times those of the residents who live there. So, you have visitors coming and going from your community all the time, and wayfinding is not for the people who are in the know, it's for the people who are unfamiliar. That's the one thing that I want to emphasize is that the work that you do using signage and wayfinding as one of your brand communications tools. Obviously, people will enjoy seeing it because it shows that there's a quality to your community, but it is going to directly benefit those who are more unfamiliar.

So, the way that we look at wayfinding programs is that they believe that they will enhance your community's surrounding landscape. So, similar to what akhia talked about in terms of a clarity and consistency and a professional image and message that is being presented about your community. You are doing the same thing with the signage and wayfinding program. You are

presenting a consistent image over and over. It also helps support an understanding of your community. It's really about not just taking a brand image and putting a logo on a sign; it's really about how you understand the context of your community and design a program that fits that image and context. There is some practical purposes, it provides information for increased comfort and safety. As Jessica talked about when you hear people complain or talk about difficulties in finding things that are pretty key to your community, that automatically sets people up for a bad experience, and that is the last thing you want because as was stated before, there are a lot of unknowns in the future in the way that communities compete from businesses who are coming there. They are going to be increasing different than they were before, and so this is one of those unique advantages that you could put forth using this type of tool within your community.

Obviously, to elevate the perception of your place, inspire increased visitation and encourage some healthy living. We also think about wayfinding and experience sort of an experience continuum. We also believe this is where it fits in with brand. Brand is presenting the story that you want people to know about you, and the way you want to know and control that message. That's how people find out about you before; but if they are hearing this message before about what you're offering, what you are providing them if they were to come to your City, then you have to do something about that when they actually get there. If things are going to change in terms of how businesses want their people to engage with the communities that they belong to, then there is some work that might need to be done in terms of how you direct what that experience is for people who are there. A lot of the communities we work with, they want to not just make sure that people know where they getting to, but they also want to highlight the great things that they have. They want people to know that these great things are there, they are part of their community, they belong to them.

We were recently working with the City of Kapata, Wisconsin, and what was frustrating to them is they had some negative perceptions that they had to get over. The city is on the Fox River. The Fox River is home to many paper manufacturing companies. If you know anything about paper manufacturing, it produces a stench, a smell that is not that appealing. While they could boast a great quality of life, and people actually love living there; they were always known for sort of that smell. They had wonderful great things. Their strategy is to make sure that people knew the things that actually belong to their community, belong to them, instead of only holding on to some of those negative perceptions. So, it's really important that whatever is being said in terms of your marketing message and how you are positioning yourself is actually going to be presented in the experience people actually have within your community.

I know you guys were talking before about how to measure these things, and I agree with the statement that it really depends on what a particular community is looking to measure and what their goals are and how you can measure up against that. We have asked these questions, even in terms of signage and wayfinding from many of our clients; and one of them is the Director of Ohio City, Inc. who is a numbers guy and a data guy and loves all this stuff. When I came back to him a few years after we had worked together on the signage and wayfinding program for Ohio City, I asked him how he felt, how this measured up. He felt that not only did it create a level of comfort and understanding for people who were coming to Ohio City and needed to know where to park and where to go. He saw a huge economic impact in terms of businesses

who wanted to come to an area, who knew they were going to be taken care of because they provided the attention to what that experience would be like for people. They saw the storefront vacancy from the point of time when we started a wayfinding project to two years after, went from 45% vacancy to 2%. So, we are not going to boast that wayfinding is like this miracle that allows people to address all of their economic development woes; but it is there is a supportive tool along with all these other things that you are looking to do specifically around your branding.

I do think one of the questions I posed to Jessica and I think you probably might be considering too is why now, but why would you invest in both your brand and look at signage and wayfinding as part of your City; and some of the things that we heard from Jessica was the fact that there are some significant development work that is happening within your City. It is pretty critical that you have an understanding of how you can incorporate this into your community well; so when those plans move into place, you have this ready to go. So, one is it's just a planning component, but again this is a way for you to direct the type of experience you want people to have with the City of Independence. This is a way for you to put your best face forward for the experience that they have with the City of Independence. So, everything that you are presenting from the branding and marketing front is going to be realized when people actually have the ability to interface within your community.

We have surveyed a lot of our potential clients and our clients on why they decided to do a project like this moving forward; and while I don't completely agree that signage and wayfinding is the only way to let people know about what is available in your community, it has to be paired with a strong brand and a strong communications program. It does present some ideas to people who are visiting you on what other things there are to do. The idea is you want people to stay longer, to engage longer; and you have again three times your regular population, over three times your regular population coming to your City on a daily basis. They might go to their places of work and stay there, but you have so much that you can offer and actually engage with that particular audience even during their daily lives while they are working. I think it's going to be even more important as you move into the future to present a City, a community that is business friendly, that is going to offer people the comforts that they are feeling right now by working from home and being able to balance their life in that way.

So, I am going to go through some of these quickly, and I would be happy to jump back and forth to discuss any of them with you; but we have the pleasure of working with many communities here in northeast Ohio. We work beyond Ohio as well, but I think these are at least places that you are familiar with and that you can go visit yourself and see how some of these programs work. I think the thing I would like to point out is that each of these are unique to the image and goal of each of these places. These programs are unique to these communities. You are not going to see any of our programs, they are not cookie cutter. There is no template for this. We are really responding to the context of place and to the image that you want to put forth.

Many of these are communities that we have enjoyed many years of working, even after establishing an initial program, other ways that we help them utilize their brand to increase investment in their community.

Actually, Shaker Square, it's our hub right now; not necessarily our home because most of us are working from home, but our offices have been in Shaker Square since 2006.

I think I would also like to say what is increasingly unique to Independence compared to other communities because we have a lot of communities who come to us and want to do a signage and wayfinding program; and the proposal that we put forth was really about understanding a solid plan and a recommendation for how you would implement signage and wayfinding as a way to improve your experience and create sense of place. You need that plan because a lot of these programs are really challenging to do all at once or over time; but what's unique about Independence is that you truly have a visitor base that is necessary to help people to have an improved experience. A lot of these communities are looking for a way just to present the image that they want to put forth to the people within their community. So, some of these programs are very strongly aligned with directing and guiding people through an experience; and some of these other programs are really about creating a sense of place and presenting their ideal identity to the people in the community.

As I said, we are presenting a master plan for you. This is our master plan that would come with a strong implementation focus so that we could help you get ready for any of these development programs that are happening so that you have the right elements ready to go and in place so that they could be incorporated into those programs, a way to understand what is the type of signage needs that you have immediately that are going to have the most impact and how you can implement this over time and manage your resources. So, the idea is not that we are having you go out and put all of these things in at once, but similar to what akhia was talking about is that you put the plan in place and you prioritize the pieces that you think are important and then you measure. Then you redefine as you move forward, but you have all the elements in place to know how long is it going to take, what resources do we need, what is it going to cost us?

Our work is to understand what exactly does your community need, what types of signs. So, we are not just talking street names, we are talking about how you are welcoming people into your City. What does gateway mean to the City of Independence, and that's going to be different from the different entry points because of the contents. Do you need wayfinding to guide people to different areas? How do you help define some of these business districts that you have so that they have a unique experience that they are putting forth as well? So, this master plan is going to get us a lot of insight and give you a lot of tools to understand how you can use signage and wayfinding as the way to continue to present and promote and meet the promises of your brand.

Any questions?

Economic Development Director Hyser asked Cathy I know one of the questions that we had from our Council members related to kind of the cost of doing some of the implementation. Can you speak to that?

Ms. Fromet said well again, the cost of implementation really comes down to identifying what the needs of your community are and also looking at what is the priority in terms of how you would implement it. We do a lot of budget work throughout the course of our development process. So, for example, when we start any signage and wayfinding program, we start with an

initial plan. This is before we go into any type of design. So, before you see a design of a sign, we are analyzing how people are moving in and out of your community, how they are getting to major destinations within your community. How are those places being identified, any critical challenges. As we are doing that analysis, we are identifying the sign types, the types of signs that we think are going to do the work that you need done to get people to move around and have a great experience. Once we do that plan, and once we do our analysis, we can actually begin quantifying a lot of these different sign types. We will do a budget right away, before we do any design work; and it's usually in a range. Every step of the way, our job is really to make sure that we are developing a program that is implementable to you not something that's going to sit on a shelf. This is an important tool, and we think it could greatly help the City of Independence; but it's not going to help you if you can't afford to actually implement it.

So, the first piece of our work is to analyze and determine the sign types you need. We have done a lot of signage and wayfinding projects so we have a lot of historic data on what these things cost. So, we can provide you some pretty solid budget ranges as you move forward. We also will take you through an exercise before we start design to understand how what design could affect the cost of these programs, and we have been able to pare down slightly to a good, better, best option. You can design a Chevy sign or you can design a Cadillac sign. We will want to gauge sort of your comfort level, but we will apply different parameters so that you can see how it affects those budget ranges. Once you are comfortable with where that goes, then we will make it in the design work; but every step of the way, we will be breaking these down into implementable projects for you that can be done over time.

For example, the City of Worthington down near the Columbus area. We worked with them to develop a comprehensive signage and wayfinding program for their entire city; and then we worked with them on a five year implementation plan breaking it down into specific types of projects so that they could determine how these projects could fit in their budget over time. Some of those projects went into particular district development efforts that they were doing; so they were able to have a cost understanding, and they could put that into the budget for that project. Others were things that they wanted to implement on their own, and so they had all that information in play so that every year they were able to kind of knock off a few of these projects. Now they have one remaining piece left, and that's to finish identification signs for some of their parks within their city; and that unfortunately got put on hold due to Covid because it was really scheduled for last year, but it's going into their 2021 plans. The idea is that you have that information and those tools to make these decisions as you move forward into the future.

So, it's hard for me to say just how much would it cost. I can go ahead and send you, Jessica I may have sent it to you, I am not sure; but I do some documents that have historic project budgets. So, you can see some of the projects that we did for specific communities, you will be able to see what that design looks like; and you will be able to see actually what was spent on getting those components implemented.

Economic Development Director Hyser asked can you talk to us about how you go about doing the analysis? What is your process?

Ms. Fromet said sure. So, we do like to engage people within the community; so that is part of our research phase. We have always said, we have the wayfinding expertise, but we are not the experts of your particular community. So, we do a discovery session where we could ask you some specific questions about the experience of your community; and we actually walk you through the ways that we analyze a place. So, it always starts with what do you consider are the places or destinations that are most important to you that you are most proud of that you would want people to know about who are not from your community? Then we will ask you about the major roadways in your community. What are the ones that you feel show off your City in the right way, that have the best experiences? We have you do some work, but we have you as a group sort of mark some of these down. We will begin to highlight what we call travel paths. So, the idea isn't that we are putting signs all over your community, we are looking at the way people travel into your community, not just by asking you questions, but even by doing our own research by seeing how some of these specific destinations tell people to get their place or how does a GPS tell you to get to these places. It will use signage and the wayfinding as a way to support whatever they are being told before they come there. So, if they have a GPS telling them you need to turn here, we want to make sure that they see that sign or information that confirms that is what they are supposed to do because I think all of us know I get this question all the time. They are like everybody has GPS so why do you need wayfinding? I have used GPS all the time. I have had GPS fail me. I have had GPS tell me that there's a street in front of me that the sign doesn't match up. We want to make sure that every experience people have with your place is alike. So, things that they are being told beforehand are things that are actually happening when they get there.

All of these pieces are supplemental, but they are also to support the image and character of the place. So, if your device is telling you to turn there, you will feel confident because there's a sign saying you are correct. I hope that answers your question a little bit, but a lot of it is it's an analysis of the most traveled paths, so not all over, and it's an analysis of where people need information to make decisions. It's also a study of the context. I think the one observation we have made with the City of Independence was that a few years ago you did have some gateway signs put into place; but I can tell you that when I have driven into the City, I have had a hard time seeing them. I think that their context and size is inappropriate for the roadways. So, we have to take all those things into consideration.

You have major entry points off of highways. That's a whole different context compared to coming in off of a four lane road. These are all things that we have to think about and consider. What kind of (inaudible) experience do you want people to have at those points when they arrive into your community?

Economic Development Director Hyser said thank you.

Chairman Synek said Jessica I have a question for you, I think more so than for Cathy; but the Administration is bringing this wayfinding initiative before Council. When it comes to branding, and I look at our logos and I can see the inconsistency; and I can fully visualize and understand the need, the purpose, the end result. I am having a hard time getting my head around with this wayfinding thing, what problem are we trying to solve? Or is it mostly an aesthetic thing to make things look prettier? What is the target? Is it primarily the commercial district? Is it

primarily the residential district? Is it City wide? I am having a hard time with those sorts of things. Could you speak to that a bit?

Economic Development Director Hyser said I think we have some different messages. First of all, when you get off the highway, you don't really know that you are in Independence. You get off the I-77 ramp at Pleasant Valley, and it says 3 miles to Independence. So, there needs to be some sort of indication that, hi you are in Independence now.

We are talking about, the City has done a lot of planning over the years. In 2012 the City did a strategic plan. In 2015 you did area plans. So, we have invested a lot of money and research and really designating some areas, but we have not followed through on kind of in doing the physical marking of space. So, as we talk about some of the projects on the horizon; we talked about the northwest quadrant. We are talking about downtown. What are we going to do to brand and physically make those spaces identifiable? Plus, we are also doing a lot of construction projects. As we do construction projects, we are not consistent; and again, this kind of goes back to the branding. When we look at our letterhead and our logos, we are not consistent; but we are also physically not consistent.

So, when you pull out here at Selig and 21, there's a street sign that is white and black that marks Brecksville Road. When you drive down Brecksville Road, there's different colored street signs; and the street markings are different. So, it doesn't emphasize place, that this is Independence, that we are consistent.

Again, on Rockside there's just the navigation. So, how do you get people to places, and it becomes an issue when businesses are trying, brokers are trying to fill a vacant space. How does he get customers into that space? How does he fill that space with a business, and how does that business gets its customers there? For example, we did a lot of improvements along Rockside Road 10 or 15 years ago to do a lot of traffic calming; and as a result, there's medians down Rockside Road which means that there are limited left hand turn movements which is fantastic. It makes navigating Rockside for somebody who is trying to get through a lot easier; however, if you are not from the area and know where to turn, it can be really frustrating.

For example, if you are traveling westbound on Rockside and need to get into Indiana Wesleyan; you see their sign on the building, but if you drive that far you have missed the opportunity to turn. We have a teeny, tiny sign that is at Oak Tree that indicates that is where you are supposed to turn. It's not in the right spot for somebody who is looking to get to that destination. So, as we are trying to improve the City and take it to that next level with branding comes wayfinding and being able to make our City welcoming to visitors and being able to get them to navigate where they need to be and get them to have that positive experience as Cathy had noted and also let them know that they are actually in Independence.

Chairman Synek said good. Thank you for that Jessica.

Cathy, I don't know if you had more slides that you wanted to show, but if you could perhaps take us out of slide view mode, it would be easier for this question and answer session that we are heading into.

Chairman Synek asked any other questions or comments from Council or participants?

Councilperson Veverka said Jessica one of the things that happened in the last couple of months was the approval of the new sign ordinance; and one of the things that I noticed over the past 10 years or so that I have become involved with the City is that we work really hard to set up a sign ordinance that's fairly restrictive. Now that it has been passed, basically the needs of what we are trying to do runs counter to what we have done. In other words, we have really worked hard in the past to restrict the size of signs on buildings and other signs. So, what step do we do? Do we now need to step back and re-evaluate the sign ordinance? You can see what's confusing me. In other words, you are suggesting we need to do this additional signage, but in the meantime, we just passed an ordinance that was very restrictive related to signs.

Economic Development Director Hyser said I think you are confusing two different types of signage though. Signage in terms of what's being able to be placed on buildings, and what's being able to be placed in yards is completely different about being able to navigate a community. For example, it's very difficult, again I am a person who grew up here, I needed to get a building permit for a shed on my property. I knew where the Building Department was. How do you get people to know where to park and to access that building? It's a challenge, and so if we want to be a welcoming community people, we need to have the appropriate type signs and be able to have them of the right size and stature and located appropriately so people know how to navigate our community safely.

Ms. Fromet said also can I add, those sign ordinances are a mechanism for you as a city to be able to control what those who are outside of your community want to put in place because that can also affect your image as well. So, if you didn't have some of those more restrictive ordinances in place for businesses that are coming into your community that could affect your image. All of this is part of the information that we look at and analyze; but in most communities you would find that wayfinding is a completely different sign program and system. It's not for a business to come in and put wayfinding signs in. This is for you as a community to guide and direct the type of experience that you want people to have with your community.

Chairman Synek said thank you. Councilperson Kapusta you had your hand up.

Councilperson Kapusta said thank you Chairman Synek. First of all, Cathy I really enjoyed your presentation; I found it fascinating. I loved all the signage. I would love that we would have enough resources to do these things, and I listened to you talk about setting priorities and kind of piecemealing and sequentially doing all of that, and I am sure that it will have to be. I think from my perspective, and no disrespect please, from my perspective you brought up a good point earlier on Jessica I think when you were talking about that we had our area planning sessions done; and we had our five areas. A lot of money was spent on that, and that was before I got onto Council; but since then we have done pieces parts of that, and so much yet in my opinion. I have that sitting on my desk right now, that document; so much yet needs to be done. I guess my concern is that we come up with these very intelligent and qualified individuals such as yourselves and the akhia group; and we get this great plan, and we don't implement enough of it for whatever reason. Sometimes it's dollars, and as I watch the signs, I thought this would look so beautiful; and I wish we had the money to put them all in right now, but I know we don't. I

don't know how, if it's in our best interest as a community to forge forward on other things. We have already plans and ideas, and maybe we can incorporate some of the things that both of your groups have into our five planning areas; but I haven't really, not that you would do that, but I am saying from our end, I haven't really heard that be given as a proposal. I would like to see how that could be done using the work that was done in those areas.

The other things about the signage and again no disrespect, but there are things about the signage; I heard Jessica talk about going into the Building Department and wondering where you park and where you go. I heard her talking about that some companies are saying that they have difficulty navigating their clients to their buildings. Well, that's a real concern to me because if I owned a business here or was trying to market a real estate company, I think that I would make a way to get those signs in place whether it was my dollars or website directions or whatever; but that's another point.

As I listen, and I think we have already some of that knowledge base here, and I don't know that we are tapping into I guess it's what I have to say. So, thank you.

Chairman Synek said thank you Mrs. Kapusta.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I was thinking too of everything on Rockside Road, how inconsistent we are. Just take a look at the node signs we have. We have I think one for Quarry Lane, one for across the street for the hotel; and every one is different. Some are inclusive, they include all the businesses. The one that is by Holiday Inn and everything, the restaurants aren't on them. There's no consistency in design, there's no consistency in messaging up and down the Rockside corridor. It would be nice to have. I was impressed with Cathy's presentation, that we have a consistent signage there.

What else is frustrating is that last year we came so close with the Planning Commission, we had a gentleman that wanted to put a Starbucks with a wall and everything else; and how that turned out. That was the same fellow who developed the Panera plaza where Panera is; and how that worked out is that you have one body or one group, the Planning Commission working with them, the Council was working them; and then when we got towards the election and everything, I thought the way he was treated was from an economic development perspective, was shabbily. I don't think he was treated properly. I don't know all the innerworkings of who all talked to him; but we were all working as a group with him to get things accomplished and then all of a sudden boom we have nothing. It was frustrating because that was going to be our gateway signage and everything. Kathleen, I don't know if you felt the same way too. That was a project that I know west side of Rockside Road, those people who work there, the people who own the buildings were kind of excited about it, and all of a sudden it disappears.

I don't know what's happening with Saucy Brew Works, but the general picture seemed that things that were supposed to come here, all of a sudden, maybe the pandemic did in Saucy Brew Works; I am not sure. It's frustrating because we have things that we work on for so long, and that's the same way with this; we were going in one direction now, four or five years from now if we get a new Administration, all that goes down the toilet, and you have a half a million dollars spent on what we would be able to show for it. That's what's frustrating to me is that we have so

much money; this is my seventeenth year, and we have paid so much for consultants for so many different things, and boy if we had that money there to put towards a few projects, we would have paid for them by now. At least we made some consulting firms happy, but to me it's frustrating because it just seems like Kathleen mentioned, a lot of plans are made, a lot of money is spent and what do you have to show for it? Overall, some we do have to show for it; others we don't. That's what frustrates me as an elected official, that we can't spend the money a little bit better and then also, again not being in the Administration part ever, it's hard to know what goes on behind the scenes in economic development. There's a lot of backroom deals or backroom discussions, not deals, but discussions and games being played. That's what's frustrating because you get your hopes up high as a resident and as an elected official that we are going to get some things done, and all of a sudden they disappear from sight. That's my editorial.

Ms. Fromet asked can I mention something because we have worked with so many communities, and honestly your perspective is not new or not different to what we face with a lot of the cities that we worked with. I do think that a lot of communities do look at signage and wayfinding as a nice to have, and so that often gets put on a back burner; but one of the things that I will say so you talked about the fact that you do have these business district plans and these master plans that you worked on. One of the things that signage and wayfinding does is it creates connections. It creates a sense of identity. It brings recognition to specific areas. It guides people to these areas, and when we do these plans, they are built and meant to be a tool to attract funding.

We had a client in Kentucky, in Crestview Hills, Kentucky, and it's this little, tiny community that I swear the office park that we worked in was probably most of the size of the community. It was a large office park. They had a shopping center and some houses, and that was it. That was their community, and a college; and in that office park they relied on that office park to be a major attractor for economic development. It was where the majority of their businesses lived; but there were problems in terms of people finding these buildings. There were actually inconsistencies in how things were addressed; so if you were trying to find a place on Google, and all of us, our minds are going to look at a numbers in a consecutive way, and then all of a sudden if a number isn't consecutive and it jumps to something else, you get lost. So, they had all these issues. They had spaghetti streets all over. I know that even when we went after the project, I went down there for a meeting like this, and I went to drive around the office park just to get a handle on it because I just said it's an office park. It was kind of a mess and I could understand why they were so worried.

What they did with the master plan that we built for them, they actually built a public/private partnership with the businesses within that community who helped provide funding for the signage and wayfinding program because they realized what a problem they had and how important it was to change the experience that people had within that office park so that they could continue to fill vacancies, and that they could continue to bring more businesses in and that those businesses wouldn't complain because when visitors would come, they wouldn't have an issue trying to find the front door.

So, it's usually a little bit deeper of a dive than that, and I do appreciate and understand because there is a lot of planning and work that goes into this; and if you do feel that there are resources within your community that can be used, that is something that we investigate with all of our communities. If they feel they have the ability to build certain signs, our job is to design things in a way that can be done and maintained economically by a community; but our expertise is a little different than that. Our job is to determine what is going to fit within your community, what is going to present information in the right way. Also, what is the right information that you are presenting? What is the message? So, our job is to really determine what sign goes where that is going to give people the information they need and how are we presenting that information in a really consistent way.

Like all of these things again are not dissimilar to what we face with other cities; but I guess it is for you really, what is going to be your priority moving forward because I think we can all agree the future is looking quite different than it was in the beginning of this year; and what is that going to mean for the businesses in your community? Are they going to be able to bring people back in the way that was there before? Or are more people going to be working from their home? If they want to try to bring people back, what is that experience? Not only in that office building, but within that community, what is that going to be?

Chairman Synek said exactly. That is the question. We are anxiously awaiting the outcome of that. Councilperson Trakas did you have a comment?

Economic Development Director Hyser said I just want to add something to what Cathy was saying real quick before we step off this topic, you know one of the things from the e-mail discussion was all about bringing in some, what resources we have in-house to do some of this from some of our past experience; and I just want to bring up the example of the signs on Pleasant Valley Road. There was a firm that wasn't an expert like Cathy is in terms of placemaking and wayfinding who designed the signs. As Cathy mentioned, they are not at the right scale so if you blink you don't even know that you have passed the Pleasant Valley welcome gateway signs; and so the reason why we want to use an expert, a consultant, is not just because we want to spend money with a consultant; it's because they have expertise in a particular field. We want to make sure that we are very careful with using City resources, that we plan appropriately; and what we do has the best interest going forward and we have spent that money wisely. Again, bringing back those signs on Pleasant Valley Road, not having the right type of firm look at those; the scale is not correct. So, Cathy has those expertise about what scale, what size, at what speed that you traveling down the road to get the biggest bang for our buck.

Ms. Fromet said and also so you don't waste money because unfortunately that is part of it. If it's not done right, then you are continuing to do things that is actually using resources. We would look at those signs and see if there's a way that we can reposition them and use them for another purpose so that you aren't wasting the money that was spent to get those in place.

Councilperson Trakas said thanks Cathy for your presentation. I had several questions, and the first one is, by the way when I was on Council in the 1990's I tried to get a sign up for an

emergency care facility. My dad was bleeding, and I couldn't find the place. We finally corrected that 20 years later; but I see what you are talking about with respect to that.

How do you handle the competition matters? I noticed, I have seen some of your signs around town. How does one office building say hey look my firm should be on your signs and not the other firms? That's one thing I think we are going to notice here, we have a lot of private interest here. We don't have any public reasons to come to Independence, we have private interest. How do you handle that, and what's the scale of that?

Ms. Fromet said so on a much public level, University Circle was probably our biggest challenge because there were so many public entities that went on the sign. Our job is to actually build what we call, it's (inaudible) criteria; and I think that's actually one of the more exciting challenges that we have with the City of Independence is how do we define these areas within your community because our recommendation is on wayfinding programs, especially on something large and vehicular, you don't put private names because you will be changing it all the time. So, really it's how do we define your City so that we can create these places and spaces that we can direct people to the front door where some of these businesses are, and we can get them there in a comfortable way.

The other thing that I would recommend, and this would probably come out of our analysis, was that we look at the sign ordinances and criteria that you do have for identifying those buildings like at certain points at the road and how we are making some stronger recommendations not to "junk up the place" but to really present a consistent image, especially in a place like Rockside Road that has so many different office complexes off of that road; and how do we create a sense of identity at the road where people are looking for that information so they know this is where I turn or this is where I need to make a decision.

So, I am not going to say your City is a challenge because of how it's set up, and because of what you have. It's different in that way, but our job is to set up a criteria because we want you to have the tools in place so when these businesses come to you and say why am I not on the sign, you would have a way to explain to them how the system works.

Actually with Crestview Hills, that office park, we actually created a communications piece that went out to all of the tenants within that office park to help them understand how the wayfinding system worked so that they could communicate that correctly to any of their visitors so that visitors could use in the right way to help them find their buildings.

Councilperson Trakas said Mr. Chairman just to follow up real quick on that. If we did go along with your proposal, have you had experience with considering instead of having another person come in and doing all these things, could you educate our own Service Department and Engineering Department as to how to put these signs up so that it's not just hiring consultants to hire consultants to hire consultants. I am concerned about that, and was just wondering what your thought was.

Ms. Fromet said we have gone down this road with a lot of different cities who have done these in many different ways. For example, the City of Youngstown recently implemented a

wayfinding program in their downtown. They chose to hire a sign contractor to build the signs, but their city employees actually installed them. So, we did walk thrus with their employees. We marked where all the signs went. They had detailed drawings. Really it's about a comfort level where if you actually have the equipment to do some of these things.

Other times we have looked at certain sign types because you have to realize these are not one sign; so this is not just a street sign, which I do think the City could do. We could design, and they could be the ones to build it and put it in place; and that has happened with many of our communities. If it's a larger gateway sign or wayfinding sign, there might be pieces of it that they don't have the equipment to actually put it in properly; but one of the jobs that we would do is perhaps help you find, are there some sign companies that are in Independence?

Someone said I am sure there are.

Ms. Fromet said we also would help you find other local vendors, people within your own community who could actually be a resource for you to do this work. So, as we are not a fabricator, our job is to find the right people, the job that we do is to find local resources for cities to use.

Councilperson Trakas said and the last question, I know Dale asked the question about solving problems. So, what types of problems could we solve by this from an economic development perspective? Are we getting people who are frustrated and turning around and leaving? I understand the concept, but I'm just trying to figure if there are, do we have some belief that there's a specific issue that we are attempting to resolve with this?

Economic Development Director Hyser said I just wanted to add that I have gotten calls from a couple of businesses; now granted I have only been here six short months; but they find it frustrating to get customers into their door. We have a lot of office buildings which I know we all think they look different, but to somebody who is not familiar with Rockside, it's just one office building looks like the next. It's frustrating for them to try to get their customers into their door.

Councilperson Trakas said I can't find my doctor most of the time, so I understand exactly what you are talking about with respect to that. From that perspective, that's something that seems to be pretty solvable from what we have been talking about.

One other point about that is it goes back to my first question, you are really talking about private entities here; and so I think we have to be a little realistic that we may not be able to solve some of those types of problems. We might be able to identify what office building is there, but if I'm trying to go to University Hospitals to see Dr. Topalski which I go to all the time, we may not be able to do that. They have a little sign that says University Hospitals, but they are a little unique from that perspective; so I guess it's a little bit a cautionary note; I don't know the answer to that.

Economic Development Director Hyser said we can't solve all the problems.

Mayor Kurtz said the problem is Jim he's with Cleveland Clinic, he's not with UH.

Several people began speaking at once.

Chairman Synek said I just need to jump in here for a moment because I have to get on another Zoom call in just a moment; but before I leave at least continue on without me. Before I leave, I want to thank Mike and Olivia and Cathy and April for joining us today. It is refreshing and energizing. The passion you bring to your work just makes me feel really good about our country and our nation and the way people find ways to employ themselves and create things where nothing existed before. You are all true professionals in what you do. Thank you so much for spending time with us here today to share more about what you do and how you do it. I apologize, I have to leave now, but I would ask Vice Mayor Grendel if you would chair this meeting in my absence and continue the discussion. I really have to go. Again, I thank you all.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good Kenn. Good luck with your seminar.

Acting Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I guess I will open it up to any further questions from Council for any of our guests. Again, I want to thank all the guests who presented today. You did a wonderful job and gave us a good understanding of what your companies could provide potentially for the City. Any questions from Council that we can entertain at this time?

Mayor Kurtz said a couple of comments before we close. I view this as a public/private partnership. Both of these entities have demonstrated today their expertise, their vast knowledge; and they hopefully have given everyone the comfort level in terms of how they can partner with the City of Independence, raise the bar, raise our identity, raise who we are and how we can attract and retain businesses.

With respect to economic development, you know it was brought up earlier, someone made the comment about you are not always aware of what's going on behind the scenes because many of our customers want it that way. Many of our business customers approach the City, sometimes in the form of a question, sometimes they are looking for direction, sometimes they are looking for some support; and it's a lot of information as Jessica eluded to earlier, that they don't want that public information. They are looking for a certain amount of integrity there. So, a lot of these things that we worked on over the years, some develop beyond our expectations, some of them don't make the cut. Vice Mayor you mentioned a couple of them. We don't want to upset the apple cart in terms of a clear path for a lot of these groups or organizations. A lot of them have to deal with financing, and they stall because of this entire upheaval in our economy. So, I can tell you that breaching confidences, if you talk to them; as a matter of fact, one was yesterday and one was two days ago, there is some potential that these could (inaudible). Financing is still a challenge for some of them as well as clarity relative to going forward in the real estate market.

Jessica and I are trying to be as transparent as possible, and I think one of the takeaways (inaudible) this future public/private partnership if Council funds this that they are both going to be transparent in terms of information and progress we make along the way. I ask you to take in all of that into consideration as we go forward.

Just to reiterate, thank you both of your organizations for your clarity to answer the questions that Council brought to our awareness. Over the last couple of weeks, we had some glitches with our technology sometime then; so I think we have a chance now with your support to clarify a lot of the misunderstandings of the past. So, I thank you very much. To be continued, and we will see how this pans out; but you have heard Council members now.

Acting Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Mayor. Again, I would just reiterate what my statement that I made before is as a legislator I think all of us, Jim you have been a legislator at different levels and everything; we have been legislators for a long time, we control the purse strings, and we take that very seriously that the tax dollars that we utilize that we get from our companies that work here, the people who live here and everything. We take it seriously that we are spending it wisely, and sometimes you make mistakes, but I would like to be able to get as much information so that the decisions that we make are really beneficial and sometimes we are asked to take a leap of faith to pass legislation to spend a lot of money. You would like to see the majority of those decisions end up being good decisions for the City, not that they haven't been. I think they have been, but in this area here where we are spending quite a bit of money in this field; you would like to have quantification that it's money well spent.

Cathy, what you said, I can visualize Rockside Road with a better signage with the people because if you are from another town, it is hard to navigate; and I would like to see a partnership put in with the businesses that, especially those node signs. I would like to see uniformity with that, and they join with the City with having something that's really pleasing to the eye and also beneficial to the people that really make sense out of it. That's the frustration I have is that I think back of all the money that is spent year in and year out, and you want to make sure that you are spending it wisely; and that's why we have that frustration.

If you are an Executive Mayor you have to be responsible for things that are definitely between you and the potential company coming in; but with us, it's frustrating. You look back, and I just want to spend our money wisely like you do in your personal life too.

I want to thank all the presenters today. They did a wonderful job. As a matter of fact, this would have worked out Jessica if we had them here at our first meeting; we would have had a better idea of what we are going to get. The first meeting I was kind of taken aback too and didn't know what to make of it. Now that we have the whole picture, it is starting to fill in and make sense too from our standpoint.

Mayor Kurtz said I think what I have learned this year, and what I think this is an example of going forward, being transparent; and I think the expectation should be as far as from my perspective that we bring these organizations on board, part of the mandate has to be that there is good communication. The relationship would be fluid in terms of making sure that you are aware of what's going on, and so that you are not having these blind spots so to speak. That's one of the goals I think in terms of giving the explanation to Council. You can validate the investment.

Acting Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Mayor.

Economic Development Director Hyser said I was just going to interject you know obviously I have only been on board six months, and I am still kind of getting used to the amount of oversight you guys have in involvement. In my past community, the City Council wasn't as involved in the day-to-day activities as much as you guys are; and I really appreciate that. Going forward we will make sure that you have the information more in advance and are kept more in the loop.

Mayor Kurtz said hey Jess, nobody wants to have my job today; all you have to do is look outside.

Economic Development Director Hyser said nobody wants your job. That phone has been off the hook.

Acting Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said I think the whole past year has been trying. Any other comments, or are we ready to adjourn?

The Clerk said Vice Mayor there is someone who had a question. She asked if Jessica had contacted any private companies to partner with the City with regard to wayfinding?

Economic Development Director Hyser said I think it's too soon. We have not, and it's too soon. We don't know what's needed, where it's needed. Again, the contract with Guide Studio is for the analysis portion, and it's too soon.

Acting Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel said and I believe Cathy you mentioned that it's part of your job is to hopefully steer the City towards maybe some partnerships like that.

Ms. Fromet said yes.

Acting Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked any other comments before we call for a motion to adjourn?

Moved by Kapusta, seconded by Grendel, to adjourn the Economic Growth & Development Committee meeting of December 1, 2020. Voice Vote: 2 yes/0 no; motion carried.

The Economic Growth & Development Committee meeting of December 1, 2020 was then adjourned at 3:06 p.m.