

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE
COUNCIL WORKSHOP
DECEMBER 16, 2021 4:00 PM
COUNCIL CONFERENCE ROOM/VIRTUAL MEETING**

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Mayor Grendel called the Council Workshop of December 16, 2021 to order via Zoom at 4:04 p.m. Present were Council Members Kathleen Kapusta, Tom Narduzzi, Kenn Synek, Jim Trakas, Dale Veverka (arrived at 4:13 p.m.) and Chris Walchanowicz.

Also in attendance were Councilpersons-Elect John DiGeronimo, Anthony Togliatti, Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz, Finance Director Vern Blaze, Economic Development Director Jessica Hyser, Service Director Ron McKinley and Joe Lencewicz of J.F. Lencewicz & Associates.

Vice Mayor Grendel said there will be a vote on legislation later today after the first hour presentation.

Welcome everyone. We won't delay any further. Jessica, I will turn it over to you so you can introduce our guests here.

PRESENT: Vice Mayor Grendel, Councilperson Narduzzi, Councilperson Trakas, Councilperson Kapusta, Councilperson Veverka, Councilperson Walchanowicz, Councilperson Synek

ABSENT:

UPDATE ON CITY BRANDING

Economic Development Director Hyser said we have our team from Guide Studio here with us. We have Gina, Cathy and Jamie all with Guide Studio. As you guys know, last year about this time we were having discussions about enhancing the City's branding and placemaking initiatives. We had interviewed several firms and gone down the path that we really were excited about bringing on board the skills of a couple different firms to help us with those initiatives. We were bringing Guide Studio on to help us with the wayfinding placemaking component; and then we had engaged a firm called ahkia to help us with the branding initiative.

As you guys know from the past and the presentation that ahkia gave earlier this year about some of the SWOT analysis that they had done with our branding, we were going down the path of working with them to further enhance that work. After several rounds, they did 9 rounds of revisions on some logos and some identity marks; we just felt that the process wasn't gelling right with us in our identity as a city. The idea again of this branding initiative was to create that sense of place, creating and building upon our strong brand and reputation as a premiere city to do business in, enhance our economic development efforts and really resonate as well with the residents who live here and feel so strongly about the City of Independence.

So, after that process, as well as working with Guide Studio on our wayfinding placemaking process, we really saw that Guide Studio understood what we are as a

community. We will share more with you about the wayfinding placemaking component at a later date and time; but we really wanted to spend time with Guide Studio so they could update you on the branding component.

What we did earlier this fall is share a lot of the information and work that Ahkia had done with us in understanding who we are as a community. One of the things I said that they did was basically a SWOT analysis. They conducted some interviews with the business community to fully understand their position on the City, and then from that Guide Studio was able to take that information and enhance it with their own process. I think they have a very unique process that they go through as they work with communities across the country to fully understand the current situation of the brand and where communities want to see them go in the future. They did that process here with us as well. All of you guys received a survey that helped them understand the direction that we wanted the brand to go. We as a staff then further got together with them to align that process a little bit more. What they did was created some new boards that we really felt aligned with us as a City.

As we went through developing the identity mark, we as a staff sat down; and the idea was that we wanted to spend 45 minutes with the staff to kind of get their insight how they felt about some of these marks. The really cool thing was that 45 minute discussion really turned into an hour and a half discussion, and it was really good to see staff, both people who live here in the City and people who worked here for a long time, as well as some new faces, how they felt about us as a community and what this mark would say about us. This identity mark is really just kind of the first step of the process that we will continue to go through, but we wanted to make sure that you guys again had the opportunity to hear from Guide Studio about their process and see where we are. So, I am going to turn things over to Cathy, she is the President of Guide Studio and her team, both Gina and Jamie here are on the call to take us through the next part of the presentation.

Gina asked Jessica are we able to share our screen?

Economic Development Director Hyser said you should be, if not Debi can give you access to share your screen.

Several people began speaking at once.

Gina said thank you for the introduction Jessica. We have really enjoyed working with the City of Independence, and it's been a really great process so far. We are excited to share where we are.

Just talking a little bit about brand just to kick it off. I know Jessica mentioned that we are working, you guys worked with Ahkia, and they did some discovery with you guys. We started to get into parts of the brand with them, and we kind of furthered that.

So, the brand is more than just a logo. We are here to share the identity or the logo marks with you today, but really when we are talking about brand, your brand, it's like Jessica

said, it's just the beginning. The logo we will share today, but the brand is really a symbolic embodiment of all of the information connected to your place, and it really is the thing that people use to create associations and expectations about you and your community. This collective perception happens with or without you directing it; so the more you can manicure it and really make sure that what you are putting out there represents who you are, how you want to be perceived, it's really important.

The tip of the iceberg here today with the logo, but really your brand includes your positioning, your messaging, your tone of voice. Beyond the logo there can be additional graphic elements that you use to fill out your system, your color, your type faces, the kind of photography you use. So, some of it will start to cover as we get into the next step of our process which is to develop a brand guidelines for you. So, everybody that touches your brand is working from the same page.

As a part of our discovery process, we did go through the information from ahkia. We also met with stakeholders and a steering group here and talked about brand objectives. So, the City wants to create a brand that conveys a fresh, grownup modern perspective that acknowledges and furthers City pride. You have a lot of pride and what can we do to take that and expand upon it and to give you guys something to rally around and be excited about and to help differentiate Independence from surrounding communities and something that aligns with the services and strengths of the City and reminds audiences of everything that the City offers. The logo won't do all of that, but it's a starting point.

So, this is one of the mood boards that Jessica mentioned. So, before we got into the design process, we wanted to really talk about character of the City. We got some of that from the survey, some of that from talking to the City, but the words that kind of came up were steady and stable. You are a really reliable community. People can count on you. It feels protective and protected to be there. You have a maturity to you. You are very neat and tidy. Just looking at the pictures here on the mood board of the City, you just get a really good sense of what the community looks and feels like. You are very neighborly. You have a quiet elegance to you, and this mood board was kind of the mood board that everybody agreed that this is looking like the City, it feels like the City. These are the character words that we want to move forward with. These are the kind of styles that we like. Using these as an inspiration and as a backdrop, we moved into design.

The logo process included the presentation of options. We refined the top choices, leading up to the final mark we are sharing today. Today we will be sharing that final mark along with application examples of how the logo might look in real life. So, we know it's hard to judge a logo just looking at a logo on a page. We like to show it in applications that you will actually use. They are not finalized, the application that we show you, but it really gives you a sense of how it can come to life.

Here we have the primary and secondary marks. So, at the top of the page we have the primary mark; so we heard a lot about the bell being really iconic to the City, tying into the history of the City, something that is really apparent and connected to that. We wanted to leverage that kind of connection to history, but also with more of modern twist.

So, the illustration style here is modern. The way this is kind of configured is modern, and inside the head of the bell we have included this letter “I” which is subtle, but it’s there. It kind of really makes it your bell, and the bell itself and the illustration style it gives the mark that steady, stable quality that we heard about as characteristic traits; and it has a boldness to it, but it’s also warm and welcoming. There’s a nice type face here that has some roundedness to you paired with a modern clean for the City of and Ohio. The Independence typeface kind of looks like it could be chiseled out of stone. We talked about having that quality to it.

What we would like to do is give our clients options when we come up with logos for them. So, we realize that the mark won’t fit into every application in this long horizontal format. So, we give you a stacked format as well. We call that the alternate mark; so most of the time you will be using this horizontal version, but we do give you a stacked version in case the space dictates that you need something a little taller.

Then too we are concerned about black and white translation. Logos for cities need to be used in a lot of different application options. They may be one color, they may be two colors, you might be embroidering them. We really want to make sure that this works in all those different kinds of formats. Here you see the black and white reversed out version.

Then we are starting to look at color and typeface this year. We are still working through this. I think that what we are showing here is a primary palette with the gold and blue really being the two primary colors, and we will be working through the secondary color palette with the City as we move forward and get into the brand guidelines. I expect that you will have more colors in that secondary palette, so you kind of have them in your brand toolkit, but this is the starting point here for that and for some of the typefaces that you might use along with the brand.

Then here is where we are getting into those applications. It is kind of where it gets exciting when we see these things in real life. Everybody likes a good mug. We have a mug example here showing how you don’t always have to use the logo in exactly the same configuration as we are showing in the primary mark. So, in this case if it’s something that you give away for swag, maybe you want to emphasize the bell here. The bell is large, and the City of Independence is separate. So, in addition to when we give the final logo files to you guys, we will give you the primary mark, the secondary mark, the bell on its own, the type on its own so you can do these sorts of things. We will also provide guidelines on how you use them so that doesn’t get abused.

Then you can see here on the shirt how it might look embroidered on a shirt, or printed on a shirt in one color which is nice, using the brand colors, leveraging those colors with the blue shirt.

Then thinking of doing banners, doing a banner system. You know we are showing a few different options about how this plays out and how we might start to bring in additional elements here too. The illustration here of your City Hall building, this could be another element we include in your toolkit so you have additional graphics that you can use

maybe in the background of this banner, or on the background of some other kind of marketing pieces. As your brand gets further developed, you can develop more and more kind of elements that go with your brand that are tied to the brand, that are part of the brand palette. Then showing how this might look on the City vehicle. Again, looking at different applications. These water bottles show, this blue one here shows how you might use the bell, how that might become a pattern. So, down here at the bottom it becomes a pattern, and we are showing it on the water bottle here that you could use that kind of thing in several different instances. Showing what this might look like in white as vinyl on a window. How your business cards might lay out, maybe the different business cards have different colored backs so that becomes another way to really bring the palette to life.

That is the last example that we have to share today, but as we move forward through the design development process and doing the brand guidelines, we will give even more examples of how this starts to play out and starts to make the real live pieces parts, the stationery system. What does this look like on social media. How does this apply to your website as it is today, and how it might be in the future, those kinds of things.

That is where we are today. Is there anything that anyone would like to go back through and look at?

Vice Mayor Grendel said I do like the color scheme, the blue and gold. It goes along with the high school colors of blue and gold and everything; so I think the colors are very attractive. I think it is a good choice, the two primary colors of the blue and gold.

It's too bad Jess that we can't use that logo for the bridge there that is going to be worked on this year over I-480. I like the bell.

Economic Development Director Hyser said no, we will take some of this and make sure that we can incorporate that into that branding.

Vice Mayor Grendel said that would be great if we could do that.

Councilperson Trakas said I like it too, and while you are on the banners part, just out of curiosity, I have always thought that having the banners where the word is hard to read if you are driving by it unless you are going clockwise, is there any religion about maybe putting it right side so it just reads Independence Ohio instead of having to turn your head to see it because every community does the same thing by the way, so it's not anything that is stylistically different. Does it make any sense to try to have it so that it's legible so that you know where you are instead of having to turn your head when you come off of the highway?

Gina said that is something we could explore, but I will tell you that just because your City name is longer, you will end up with a very small Independence. We need banners that are wide.

Jamie said legibility is relative in that case. So, if it is horizontal, then the word would be too small to really pick up. Since it is just one word, maybe two words in this case with

Ohio, the read is pretty quick and hopefully you are not turning your head too much, so at least you are kind of seeing a familiar typeface that is part of the brand and not necessarily that you need to read it right away or quickly, at least there is some kind of consistency there. That is what we are trying to go for.

Councilperson Trakas said it all looks wonderful.

Economic Development Director Hyser said the hope too is to try to incorporate some of these signs with the branding as well as the wayfinding; and so we will explore that a little bit further as we unveil a little bit more about the wayfinding component, placemaking component as well.

Councilperson Trakas said having our own liberty bell with our “I” in it is great too.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I was just going to say, Jim, I like the incorporation of the “I” there on the liberty bell.

Councilperson Narduzzi asked so what if we had the date that became a City on the bell when you use just the bell because it looks, besides the “I”, there is really no identification. If there was a date on there, not copying 1776.

Gina said I think that’s a really good idea for a t-shirt or something like that. I think that could be really cool on a shirt, and that is something we didn’t show yet, but we typically do, so now I want to design a shirt. We will make sure we include that the next time around.

Mayor Kurtz said put 1960. In 1960 we became a city.

Economic Development Director Hyser said I thought it was 1814 we did.

Mayor Kurtz said that was a township. In 1960, that was the year we became a city.

Councilperson Trakas said Mayor while you are talking about that, is it time to maybe look at redesigning our City flag? We have had the same City flag since 1960.

Mayor Kurtz said well I am sure Guide Studio would love to tackle another project for us. Jim, you just have to fund it that’s all.

Councilperson Trakas said that’s the hard part, right?

Mayor Kurtz said not necessarily. We are trying to create something that is sustainable, that makes sense. It is consistent with our history. These are all good ideas. I am glad we are honing in on some of these elements that they have identified. Keep it up, let’s keep going.

Vice Mayor Grendel said like I said, the color scheme, those colors are perfect, consistent with the schools and the City.

Economic Development Director Hyser said we really struggled with the color component, and when you think Independence, it often goes red, white and blue. Our school colors are blue and gold, but this kind of really incorporate a little bit more of a

rich blue, that almost teeters on that teal side; so it's unique from the schools, but complements the school history as well.

Councilperson Synek said this is excellent, being the enemy of good because I really like this whole layout. It freshens up what we have. It's not a total departure from everything, the long history. Everyone knows Independence is one of those words that could have been thrown under with tradition, and it follows the traditions that have already been established. There is a clear link to it.

Again, I don't want to make excellent the enemy of good, but I thought maybe in some iterations, that "I" for it to be in a contrasting color might make it pop a little bit more in some instances, maybe just something to think about. Then I guess the word Ohio to me can almost subtract from the importance of the word Independence, but by the same token, the word Independence is so long, you need something to fill the space. Any thoughts on the inclusion of the word Ohio in such a prominent place?

Economic Development Director Hyser said one of the things from an economic development standpoint, is that we need to include Ohio when we are doing marketing materials and have information on our website for people who do not know that Independence is actually in the State of Ohio. There are many Independences throughout the country, and so that's one of the considerations that we asked Guide Studio to include as an option to include Ohio as part of the logo design. It doesn't necessarily mean it has to be used in all instances.

Councilperson Synek said yes, I do think that certainly there is a place for that, not the majority of our audience, but certainly a segment of our audience; but that is probably in the 20% more than the 80%. That is one thing that caught my eye is that perhaps that word Ohio subtracts from Independence which is the important part of the thing. I don't want to be the enemy of the good, it's beautiful and I really like it, but that was just one initial thought reaction I had and wanted to share that.

Jamie said that's a good point, and we do show an example on the mug where, if a mug is going to be handed out more locally to a local crowd, sure Ohio is not necessary. I think there are many times where it's not, and maybe even on the banners. You are already in Ohio. There is definitely many instances where it will not be necessary, and I agree we could definitely look at that.

Gina said we can talk more about that when we are building guidelines and kind of point out when it's important to use from an economic development standpoint and when it can go away.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked any other comments from Council?

Councilperson Kapusta said I agree with Kenn's comment regarding that "I." Until Tommy pointed out that was the "I" holding the bell up, I didn't even catch that; and I think that's a really neat feature. So, when possible if we could somehow delineate it to stand out a little bit more, whether it's a darker shade of blue, whether it's actually the

gold there, whatever you creatively think is appropriate; but I think that would be a really nice feature of it to highlight that a little bit more.

Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Kathleen.

Councilperson Narduzzi said just pinstripe it in white or pinstripe it in gold.

Vice Mayor Grendel said so take this a step further then down the road from some of our signage and everything, we will have this logo on our signs that we have around town?

Economic Development Director Hyser said it will be blended in with that. Cathy can probably add a little bit more color and flavor to that. When we were working with them through the whole placemaking process, she designed some stuff with placeholders for our branding to be applied to, and that was really the kind of holdup on finishing up some of that work. Again, we really wanted to develop a logo and brand feel that we felt aligned really well with the City, and I think Cathy and her team really did a fabulous job. Sharing this, that first step will be refining that.

Just so Council is aware, Alla is on the call today, but under the weather. So, this has been a really huge process for both her and me to undertake; and it has been I think well worth the wait. The next step is really developing the guidelines on how to use the brand, and then working on an implementation strategy that will probably need some additional assistance from Guide Studio on developing and implementing.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked now from a timeframe, what are you looking at as far as the finished product, another month or two?

Gina said well the logo isn't nearly done; so a month or two to finalize the logo and the brand guidelines yes for sure. What we do need to do is talk about implementation and then kind of what beyond just the market and the guidelines you guys need to roll this out.

Vice Mayor Grendel said because the process seems, we have been at this for a year or two now, and we have been at it for a long time. It seems like everything takes so doggone long. I might be out of office by the time this gets implemented and that.

Economic Development Director Hyser said that will not be the case. That was honestly the reason why, you know it's the end of the year, we have been really working on this hard; but Kathleen has been such a huge supporter for us on doing this branding and wayfinding, I wanted to make sure before her term was up that we were able to include her in this process. It definitely will be much sooner. You will not have left office Vice Mayor, but we will be working on that implementation plan over the next couple of months to really work on rolling out this probably in the second quarter of next year.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good because it seems like we have spent a lot of money on this kind of promotion for the City over the years, and it seems like we have so little to show for it. This I am really proud of. It is probably one of the most exciting things we have had as far as branding goes for quite some time. That's why I'm kind of excited to

get it out.

Economic Development Director Hyser said this is something that the entire community can get around versus the previous YourIndependence which was really focused on the economic development efforts. This is something that the entire community, both business and resident community can embrace.

Vice Mayor Grendel said agree.

Any other questions for our guests here from Guide Studio?

If you have anything, just speak. Mayor, do you have any comments? I know you are excited about what you have seen so far.

Mayor Kurtz said we put a lot of time and effort, a lot refining, a lot of what if. I am thrilled to hear the feedback and the additional input; and I am sure Guide Studio will incorporate at least refine, using as much data information that Council has addressed today. I am excited thinking about some of those things; but I am so happy that you embrace the concept and the finished product, or at least the conceptual product, the framework of it.

Vice Mayor Grendel said my concern is about the bridge. If we are going to have, that is quite a big investment in the enhancement of that Brecksville Road bridge over I-480. I would like to see something like this. If we don't approve it for June or July, it might be too late to incorporate that in that bridge design.

Cathy said as Jessica said, we have worked on a signage and wayfinding program for the City but had sort of put that project on hold until your arms are wrapped around in terms of what this would look like from a brand identity standpoint. Now that you have gotten to this point, and you are comfortable with what is being shown here; Jessica I think that is something that we should talk about probably immediately and talk through the consultants that are working on that bridge project so that we can help get that artwork to them so that it could be incorporated into that effort.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good, thank you Cathy.

Economic Development Director Hyser said I would just like to remind everyone we are working off of several different logos now. We have a City seal. We have the stars Independence. There is a YourIndependence logo. In some iterations, you see previous logos of the City. In working with Guide Studio, we are going to meld all of this into one logo. You will start seeing, once we do this rollout, letterhead, business cards, all having a consistent logo. That's really going to help elevate our impression to both our resident community and the business community. Again, the sign in the Council Caucus room reminds us that our City mission is to be the premiere community for both residents and to work; and this will help us achieve those goals by having one consistent look.

Councilperson Veverka said I am pleased to hear the positive comments from my colleagues. I couldn't get on the Zoom meeting, and I just wanted to let you know I am

pleased with everybody's efforts, the blue and gold choices I am hearing about. I would love to be able to see some in person, but as I said, I can't get on Zoom, which for the later part of meeting, just be aware that I have to still work it this way.

Vice Mayor Grendel said okay Dale. Jessica, could we possibly get some of those in paper form so that Dale can see it.

Economic Development Director Hyser said I do have the presentation, and I can print those and have them delivered.

Mayor Kurtz asked can you email them to him?

Economic Development Director Hyser said I can. I think he might be having technical computer problems though, so we might have to have those delivered.

Vice Mayor Grendel said that will be fine because Dale should be able to have a chance to look at them too because I think he will be equally impressed.

Mayor Kurtz said we have someone who works here that can drop them off at his house.

Councilperson Narduzzi said so Jessica, I have a question for you. The two signs on Pleasant Valley Road we had done a couple of years back, probably three years ago.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think they were \$100,000 apiece weren't they Tom?

Councilperson Narduzzi said those signs are terrible, just literally terrible, and I don't know. Councilperson Trakas brought up the point, the banners you read from the bottom up. I had a problem with that three or four years ago, and I still have a problem with it today; but those signs on Pleasant Valley, by the time you start at the bottom and start reading up, you are past the sign.

Economic Development Director Hyser said the issue with those signs are two-fold. One, there is no backdrop on them so it makes it more difficult for you to see when you are driving by; and two, the scale. So, when we keep talking about signage and undersigning the scale and application; that is why Cathy and her team are skilled at this. They understand the size and scale. Unfortunately, Independence is a long word, and so having it fit on a banner in a horizontal format just makes it more difficult to read than having it in that vertical format. I think the trouble that you see with those signs, and I completely agree, is the fact that they are see-through and the size of them. So, when we do signage moving forward, those things will be taken into consideration.

Councilperson Narduzzi said we spent a lot of money on that, and they are just terrible.

Economic Development Director Hyser said we will repurpose those signs because they are good signs. They are good for pedestrian application, but not at the speed at which cars are traveling.

Cathy said some of the discussions we had when we were looking at them is that they would be appropriate because of their size like as part of trailheads so pedestrians could see them. I hate to see anything that has been done like that recently and with that

amount of money spent on them not used. So, we are going to work at repurposing those signs, but all of your concerns are completely understandable; and that's part of what we are looking at in terms of how we are identifying these areas and providing guidance within your community.

Councilperson Veverka said it might be appropriate if you put one of them down by Hemlock Trail.

Councilperson Synek said sure just signs there.

Vice Mayor Grendel said and keep a camera focused on it too in case there are vandals down there.

Councilperson Synek said Jessica you mentioned at the start of it, there was the other group that was helping us with the branding thing, are done with them?

Economic Development Director Hyser said we terminated that contract. We determined through this process that we wanted a good fit, and we determined also through that process that working with Guide Studio, they really understood who we are as a community and that they were a better fit. So, it was a better use of our resources to pivot and use Guide Studio.

Vice Mayor Grendel said and I think that was a very good choice.

Councilperson Veverka asked any potential legal consequences?

Economic Development Director Hyser replied no.

Vice Mayor Grendel said the initial presentation, I was myself more impressed with Guide Studio at that point more so than ahkia at that time. So, I am glad that we came to the realization that there is a quality company in our midst that we can utilize their services and their expertise.

Economic Development Director Hyser said there are a lot of quality companies, and Guide Studio really does have a specialty in working with communities. It was eye-opening for them to really understand, go through the placemaking process. They get us as a community, and that was refreshing.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked any other questions or comments for anyone?

Councilperson Veverka said I don't know if I heard an answer about is the Legal Department satisfied? Do we have any concerns about them coming back at us?

Economic Development Director Hyser said there are no concerns from the Legal Department.

Councilperson Veverka replied thank you.

Vice Mayor Grendel said so in summary then Jessica, it's going to be all-encompassing. It's going to be through our park system as well as the various areas. There could be possibly different variants, like on Rockside Road as opposed to Pleasant Valley. Are you

going to look into that because we have different districts, and hopefully maybe as the Cloverleaf area in the coming years might have more important, so we can have each district keep the same consistent logo, but maybe have something that was unique to each district in town.

Economic Development Director Hyser replied correct, and we will talk about that at a later date. Cathy and her team did some really good work on really helping us establish that sense of place, as well as addressing some of the challenges, particularly in the Rockside Road area in terms of directing traffic and being able to get people to the place that they are desiring to go.

Economic Development Director Hyser asked any further questions for Cathy and her team?

Vice Mayor Grendel said like the Mayor mentioned, keep up the good work. We like what we see so far and hope to see more of it soon even.

Economic Development Director Hyser replied thank you.

Vice Mayor Grendel said Merry Christmas to everyone.

Well Mayor I see that we are at 4:45 p.m., and I guess in good shape Tom if we move on to the legislative part of the agenda that we will be able to take a vote on these two issues and you will be able to go to your function there and everything.

**ORDINANCE NO. 2021-156 2021 ANNUAL APPROPRIATIONS ORDINANCE (I:
COUNCILPERSON VEVERKA, VICE MAYOR
GRENDL, COUNCILPERSON SYNEK)**

Vice Mayor Grendel said we will move on to Ordinance 2021-156, and it's the 2021 Annual Appropriations Ordinance. Vern, I see you are here and everything. Would you like to make your comments please?

Finance Director Blaze said sure, it's pretty self-explanatory. Good news, as it is typically most public entities at the end of the year do a final budget amendment to try to get the actual expenses and revenue estimates to line up as closely as possible as to what the budget amounts are. So, we were able to make a number of reductions as far as the appropriations, and that's always good news. I did send out an email yesterday with just a summary of those areas, changes to the final appropriation amendment here.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I see the General Fund appropriation was reduced by \$980,500.

Finance Director Blaze said fast track, we were trying to find that other \$19,500 to get to \$1,000,000; but since the SCM&R Fund has traditionally been considered part of the Operating Budget, that one got reduced by \$45,000; so combining both of them, there was a nice reduction in the overall Operating Budget there.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked and you feel comfortable that this will take us into the end of the year with anything coming up in the next two weeks.

Finance Director Blaze said you hope there are no last-minute surprises. We have done two things this year. We have asked a lot of the engineering contractors working on the big projects to start billing us a little bit more timely at the end of the year so that there is nothing outstanding and holding over into the new year, or as little as possible. Then secondly, we have asked Directors to kind of cut off their requisitions to buy things the last couple of weeks this year just to ease the paperwork coming in here and so that we can concentrate more on paying the bills that are coming in and not creating new outgoing expenditures. So, we have flexibility. We told them if there’s any emergency or things they have to have, for sure send those requisitions over; but so far last week and this week we have done pretty good as far as getting Directors to get all of their requests for purchase in the first ten days of this month. So, that will make the end of this month go a little bit smoother than in past years.

Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Vern. Any questions for the Finance Director?

Seeing none, I would like to make a motion to consider this legislation and have Debi read it by title only please.

Moved by Grendel, seconded by Narduzzi, to read by title only. Voice Vote: 7 yes/0 no; motion carried.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we don’t need a motion to suspend because this is Second Reading.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Dave Grendel, Vice Mayor
SECONDER:	Chris Walchanowicz, Councilperson
AYES:	Grendel, Narduzzi, Trakas, Kapusta, Veverka, Walchanowicz, Synek

ORDINANCE NO. 2021-165 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE, COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES LOCAL 2339 AND OHIO COUNCIL 8 (AFSCME) (I: **MAYOR KURTZ**)

Vice Mayor Grendel said Ordinance 2021-165, Debi can you read by title only.

Moved by Grendel, seconded by Narduzzi, to read by title only. Voice Vote: 7 yes/0 no; motion carried.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked Mayor would you like to highlight some of the important points of this?

Mayor Kurtz said thank you Vice Mayor and Council. We are just trying to wrap a few things up to be better prepared for 2022. Service Director Ron McKinley and Joe Lencewicz are available. Joe, would you like to just take a moment and summarize, or at least give Council a flavor of what they have read so they can hopefully move on this legislation tonight?

Joe Lencewicz replied certainly. Good Evening Council. It’s been a while since I have been before you, and I appreciate the opportunity. Just quickly, when you look at the document that was presented, most except the economic issues, were cleanups. I wouldn’t spend a lot of time

except the issues about the dates, etc.

The highlights really are around the compensation, the sick leave provision when one retires and the issues that we look at in terms of making requirements for Ron to do his job and getting language to ensure that he has the managerial discretion to do so.

Just quickly, as you go through. Remember the article about sick leave that is giving the employees an opportunity to increase their payout at retirement, as in we increase slightly, as is comparable to the Firefighters and Policemen, it comes to one-third, but it's still not the number that they have. As probably from a comparison standpoint, less than most cities, comparable communities around. It is something that they asked for and something that was reasonable. They didn't get everything that they asked for, it was a compromise; but I have to tell you in my opinion and the Mayor's, this was the right thing to do for our employees going forward.

Mr. Lencewicz said compensation. This is the biggest issue because I want to give you a little background concerning where we were nine years ago. We have a two-tier wage system, and we put that into effect in 2013; and it was good at that point because we have a lot of folks that basically the levels that they were coming in at were extremely high. So, we established a two-tier system with a seven-step progression. Here we are in 2021 going into 2022. With the labor market being what it is, and the wage comparisons to other folks in that second tier, both parties agreed that we needed to work on that. Based on that, we put together our proposals to (a) minimize the steps, reduce them from seven to four and increase on an equity adjustment basis the lower steps so eventually they would get somewhere in the several contracts back up, and we would not have the big disparity between the two tiers. Currently, it has to be 10%. We don't have that any longer, and we are trying to move that in that direction. Therefore, the concentration was there.

The important thing, we had classifications that (a) weren't being used. That's why we eliminated the vehicle equipment body mechanic, the carpenter and the cemetery sexton; and we combined three classifications in the service maintenance area to one classification now referred to as service worker. Now we have two classifications in both levels, auto mechanic and service worker. Service worker can basically do anything that can be done, and once again it's a managerial flexibility issue.

We pay normal increases that are going on around the area. So, in that tier one, we have 3% in the first year, 2 ½% in the second year, and 2 ½% in the third. Of course, they wanted more than that, but we said that's where we are.

We did the very same thing in the second tier. We eliminated those three classifications that I referred to earlier. We combined three maintenance classifications into one service work; and in that second tier we reduced the number of annual step progressions from seven to four with one critical provision that's in there that the Service Director has the managerial rights which he didn't have before, to move those people, to accelerate those step progressions if he deems it necessary with the progress of the younger folks coming in. That's important because Ron has already said that the number of people he has hired are really outstanding people, and this is sort of his opportunity to grant them increases as his discretion if they are performing well.

We gave them each, to try to narrow this gap that I was talking about, an equity adjustment in each year of the contract after the general increase is applied. In the first year it's \$.30, second year \$.30, last year \$.25. Does that get them all the way to the top? Absolutely not. It is a work in progress, and as we discussed and negotiated, we will try to do that as we move forward because it's in the betterment of the employees and the City and doing it from a gradual cost standpoint Vern.

The other situation that we have. We have two employees, and a part of the service worker job requirement is that everybody has to have a CDL. Well over the years we have two employees who are classified as what we call Maintenance 1 who did not require a CDL, but everybody should be required. We permitted them not to have the CDL for various reasons, some of it is the capability to get it. Secondly, it just happened during our negotiations, we found out that the Department of Transportation, and Ron might want to describe that a little bit; but the punchline on that is the Department of Transportation now requires anybody who wants to get a CDL has to take a 200 hour costs which costs between \$5,000 and \$6,000, and we don't pay for that. That just came on the books; and these two employees are rather senior employees. I think the Mayor put it well. We are not here to hurt any of our employees, let's make sure we take care of them to the point that they can continue to work, but they were working at a lesser hourly rate anyhow. So, that's basically what we said for these two employees, we are going to keep you as long as you do the work you need to do without the CDL, and we will pay you at a lesser rate until you get a CDL if that's the case before you get full status as a service worker. So, from that standpoint, we are taking care of the two employees that I mentioned.

Outside of that, and the duration is three years long; that is the bottom line.

Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Joe. Any questions of Joe or Ron from Council?

I see none. Any further comments Mayor?

Mayor Kurtz said no. Only that it was obviously negotiated, and everybody is trying to take a broad stroke at trying to make sure that we take care of our employees. This is a unique time in that we have talked about this the last year that employee base of trying to get good, qualified people. It's becoming more challenging in the public sector, and so to be able to accomplish and get the broad support of the union as well as the leadership and management team that Ron is putting together, and Joe did a great job of coordinating that effort. I am proud of our union team and our leadership team and management team to be able to bring this to Council. Like Joe said earlier, these contracts are always a work in progress. We will review in a couple of years and see how close we hit the target, but meanwhile, we keep our workforce competitive. We are competitive as a community, and I think we are creating a work environment that everyone can be proud of and continue to be productive. So, that pretty much sums it up.

Vice Mayor Grendel said and I think it's outstanding that we have the contract done on time at the end of this year. So, we are ready to start the new calendar year to coincide with the new contract which reminds me, what is the status of the other union contracts with Police and Fire?

Mr. Lencewicz said Dave, good question. As far as the Firefighters go, we are down to one issue basically, and we are haggling over that issue if you will in terms of where we want to be; and

what has really compounded that in terms of where we are with the safety forces is that this new projected legislation from the State of Ohio requiring employer contributions to the Firemen and Police Pension and Disability Fund is really going to cause havoc. We are taking a lead on that right now since we just found out about it. Vern has definitely done a good job of keeping us apprised as to what is going on, but those numbers are really factoring into our negotiations with the safety forces and quite frankly are creating major heartburn and potentially for us because the issue is for Firefighters. I don't know if you know the exact contributions that you are paying toward that fund, but currently for the Firefighters, it is 24%. Vern, you can correct me if I'm wrong. It's 24% for the Firefighters for every dollar that you pay them. That's another \$.24.

For the Police it's currently 19%. The legislature is recommending effective in 2022, whether this happens or not, we need to take that into consideration as we are aware of it, and the union is not really being supportive. I understand that. It's a situation where we don't care what the State does, we still want our wages; and we have said no to the Firefighters. Theirs will go up 2 ½% from 24% to 26 ½%, and the Police contributions from the City of Independence would go from 19% to 26 ½%, a 7 ½% increase.

Mayor Kurtz said 19 ½% is Police, isn't it Vern?

Finance Director Blaze said correct, just a ½% difference.

Mr. Lencewicz said to answer your question Dave, this has sort of muddied the waters, particularly with the Firefighters right now because we are basically there except for that issue.

With the Police we haven't had any negotiations with them. We submitted all the paperwork back in October, and we haven't heard from them. I as recently as Tuesday of this week, contacted their attorney and said where are with the negotiations? He said he really didn't know where the local was, and he was going to assign it to another person in his law firm to get back to me. As far as the Police are concerned, the Patrol Officers and the Supervisory Unit, there are two separate units, two separate contracts. So, we are nowhere with them at this point. We will get there because quite frankly as I mentioned to both the new Police Chief and the Mayor and to the Union; we are okay to stay with the contract we have if you don't want to negotiate new terms and conditions.

Vice Mayor Grendel said if I remember correctly, and Council can correct, the last time the Fire, that contract took a long time to get that resolved, I think even longer than the Police.

Mr. Lencewicz said and Dave there was one factor we did, the Mayor was really, really upfront and gave instructions about what he didn't want to happen again. One of the things, there is a term called signed a G11 agreement. What that does is permit unions to get retroactivity in the year in which they conciliation award if we go to conciliation. We didn't sign that this year for anybody. So, the bottom line is, the onus now, in my opinion, is on them to determine whether they want to negotiate a contract before we have to go into the new calendar. We are not intending if we have to go all the way. Our objective is not to negotiate a fair contract and make it effective on January 1st, not when you are going to play games around the issues because the onus is on you to be reasonable in terms of the union because we have been over the years. We don't play games with that situation.

Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Joe.

Councilperson Trakas said more of a process question. In every negotiation I have been in the past, Council was brought in with the Finance Director and the negotiator, and we set what the City position might be and anticipate some of the issues that might be brought up by labor. Is there a reason why we didn't do that this time? This is the first time I have heard any of these types of economic discussions. They have a big impact on our budgetary requests, and none of us are aware of where we might be going and what might be going on with other negotiations.

Mr. Lencewicz said Jim I don't recall going before Council with regard to the issues that the Union brings up until the end when we have them. In terms of planning what the general parameters, what I call the pie is, we have. I know I have sat down with Vern and the Mayor, and we talked about the general parameters in terms of what the economics would be, at least for the first year. As I say this issue about what has transpired is just a recent development about the pension contributions. Vern, we just found that out in the last week or so.

Mayor Kurtz said well I think Jim brought it up to us also. You mentioned it to us a week or so ago.

Councilperson Trakas said just generally.

Mayor Kurtz said I thought that you mentioned something to us about it being on the horizon potentially.

Councilperson Trakas said as we are putting together our budget for next year, we don't know where we might want to be economically with the union. I would just make that point. I think it's incumbent upon us to all sit down together and have these discussions so that we all know where we are going so we can make budgetary considerations as well.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think Vern when you presented the budget this past week or so, and you had factored roughly what the parameters were as far as the contracts go for the Fire and Police as well as Service.

Finance Director Blaze replied correct, and I didn't know if it was so much a factor of what the Finance Department factored in as it was at least as far as Police, Fire and Service go, those Department Directors being involved, at least the two Directors, with contract negotiations ongoing here the last period of time. So, they kind of had a feel for where they were going, where we might end up and factoring those into their proposed budgetary numbers when they met with the Mayors. Then those were just facilitated on down here. The bottom line is the proposed spending in the 2022 temporary budget that was passed, and the permanent one that will be passed in January is reflecting the reality that wages are going to go up in 2022.

Mayor Kurtz said there's somewhere in the middle that might have been more comfortable Jim, but when we met with the Department Heads, and the Department Heads articulated their budget information to Council, I thought several of them mentioned about the increase in line items. If they didn't, I apologize.

Vice Mayor Grendel said to Jim's point and everything, this coming year, we would probably

appreciate Mayor if we do have updates when we have our meeting. If there's anything to report, like when we have regular meetings; I know a lot of it is sensitive because even in Executive Session; sometimes you have Executive Session and information gets out. Next thing you know, it gets over to the union and everything. There is a balancing there that has to be followed.

Councilperson Trakas said like the time Harry Zaruba called the Firefighters and told them exactly what our strategy was.

Mayor Kurtz said you are absolutely correct Vice Mayor that it is a balancing act. We are all on the same team, but there are times when one of the oars is going one way, and the other oar is going the other way. So, it's very sensitive. There are a lot of interesting dynamics that are a part of this process, and so we established the parameters in the budget information that was forwarded and approved by Council. The nuances are these little modifications. They are delicate and sensitive. We can find ways to make sure we get more information out, but there are sensitive issues.

Mr. Lencewicz said I think that is an excellent point that was brought up because one of the things that we try to do in the negotiations with our counterparts, the proposals that you give us, and the proposals that we give you, these are things that we think we need to have. The negotiation process rarely ends up with those being what they are, and one of the ground rules that I have established with my counterparts, we don't talk about where we are with proposals and negotiations because it raises expectation levels, particularly on the other side when somebody comes in and says as they did. We want a \$1,400 essential worker bonus, and all of a sudden people think that is what they are going to get; and by the way, that was one of their proposals. It doesn't work that way as this thing progresses through, their proposals in particular. When you look at them at first blush if you want to get updated, you say my God, that's never going to happen. You are right, that's not going to happen, but sometimes people lose perspective when they look at the initial proposals and the various sessions that we have to pare them down. I know Kenn has been in negotiations with teachers. We talked about it, and he understands that process too. You can't be communicating and discussing proposals at one point and time because they may be totally irrelevant in the very near future.

Mayor Kurtz said I think what we try to do is not create a dynamic with Members of Council where you feel that you are being taken to the wood shed or something because if we threw out the first volley, it could skew your perspective and ultimately you have to vote. We are not trying to create a permanent dynamic that skews your attitude towards a specific union or a specific group that is negotiating. We try to get rid of the fluff so that what we present to you is real, and I think that way you are not jaundiced or skewed by a dynamic that, people get out, and especially with social media and all that nonsense, it can just mess up everything.

Mr. Lencewicz said either party can get polarized very early in the process, and that does not bode well to get an agreement at the end.

Mayor Kurtz said so the bottom line is we have one potentially done if you approve it tonight. We have one in the queue, and then we are not sure what the third one is; but look, we are making progress in a very uncertain environment.

Vice Mayor Grendel said well Mayor I for one am pleased in reviewing the summary and everything, I think for both sides it was a fair contract, and I think it was done on a timely basis. I am pleased that we were able to get that one completed before the end of the year. I look forward to hopefully getting the Fire contracts soon after the first of the year and everything too, but I think it was a very good job Joe and Ron under the circumstances. I am pleased with how the Service Department negotiated too.

Mayor Kurtz said it was very fair, and Ron did a great job. Being on board now, his first one, I was very happy with trying to create a dynamic environment for everybody to keep working.

Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Mayor. Any further questions?

Councilperson Veverka said Joe when we negotiate teacher contracts, one of the things that we typically do is take the whole number of items that are in a master agreement and agree to bring only like three or five items to the table. Is that how it worked with this contract?

Mr. Lencewicz said no. I am not so sure with what you are referring to when you say we bring just four or five issues to the table.

Councilperson Veverka said let me speak to that a little bit. What I am saying is in the master agreement there happened to be grievance procedure and every possible item that you want, extra pay, overtime pay, a whole bunch of other items; and it became such a painful process when you had to negotiate or be aware of 25 items. So, that's why specific areas, at least informing Council of just the areas that are being focused on are important. Everybody should know that obviously, the pay is a big item. How you are going to cover hospitalization is an item, and then one or two other items that simply one gives and one takes and whatever. Everybody comes to the table with a list of gee I want, I want, and it's a question of what's important.

So, as far as being informed as a Council Member, I was pleased to talk to you earlier, about two months ago.

Mr. Lencewicz said yes, at the Police Chief's Swearing In Ceremony.

Councilperson Veverka said that was why I thought that we might get just a little bit of a hey here are three or four target issues that are being dealt with without specifics of course.

Mr. Lencewicz said in terms of how the Council wants to be communicating with, what the issues are, that is between you and the Mayor, and whatever we need to do that, we can do that in general terms. You have to remember something too, these are mature contracts. We are not talking about issues that are going to be brought out of nowhere. If you want to look at the end of the day what we have and what we do, they really center around economics, particularly wages. We have an insurance committee, and we have special circumstances with how that is being conducted which Council does participate. That's usually done not as a part of the negotiations unless that process fails and then we go back to negotiations. That has worked well. In terms of where we are with the major issues, if you wanted to know our major issues, we are looking at compensation and trying to improve the productivity of the classifications by making them more expansive in terms of their ability to perform the work. That is the basic approach. We don't have grievance procedures they have to redo. We really don't have the other provisions of the

contract because they are in place. It's not like starting a brand new contract where you have everything on the table if that makes any sense.

Councilperson Veverka said I guess that was my question. So, you are saying that the other issues that are there in the current contract are the ones that you were able to basically check off as these are satisfactory. The union agrees, we pretty much agree that you don't need to deal with grievances. We don't need to be relieved of duty or whatever it happens to be.

Mr. Lencewicz said that's basically correct Dale. We don't have any. You can see their proposals, some of them are outlandish, but they are outlandish in the economic sense, not in the procedural sense. There are times when they try to restrict our right to manage issues or restrict our right to scheduling which obviously that's a no-go from the very beginning. I think because of the relationship, those issues that come to the table are minimal anymore because they know they are not going to get any of that kind of stuff. Anything that restricts are ability to manage the operations is not going to be entertained.

Councilperson Narduzzi said excuse me Dave, but if we want to vote on the Service contract while I am still here because I have to get going. You guys can debate the other two, that would be fine with me. I really have to be moving here.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked now has the union voted on this and approved it?

Mr. Lencewicz said they ratified it yesterday by what was told to me a comfortable margin.

Vice Mayor Grendel said very good.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I have had a question for 15 minutes now. I just have one issue, and I don't understand why we released or removed the position, Independence has always had a sexton at that cemetery whether it was Stanley or Red Wisnieski. Why all of a sudden do we not have a sexton for our cemetery?

Mr. Lencewicz said Chris we do have the assignment. What we did was specifically revise the temporary assignment language whereby when the person, the service worker who is assigned by Ron to perform the duties of the cemetery sexton, he will get \$1.75 more an hour; and it so happens that the President of the Union happens to be the person who has been traditionally assigned to the sexton duties. If you note on my summary in the temporary assignment which is in Article 37, it takes that into account. We have it Chris.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I must have misunderstood earlier when those positions that were combined together.

Mr. Lencewicz said well those were eliminated. The only assignment we had was the cemetery sexton, and we made provisions for that specifically.

Councilperson Walchanowicz replied thank you.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked any other questions before we entertain a motion. We have already had the reading of the legislation, so we will need a motion to suspend.

Moved by Narduzzi, seconded by Grendel, to suspend the rules. Voice Vote: 7 yes/0 no;

motion carried.

Vice Mayor Grendel said the legislation has been passed. Council has approved this contract also.

Mayor Kurtz said I just want to reiterate, thank you Council for your support. Joe Lencewicz, great job, and Ron you have been a welcome addition and good luck administering this contract. I know you will do a good job and be fair with our people and do a good job for the citizens.

Mr. Lencewicz said thank you Mayor, thank you Council.

Councilperson Narduzzi said Merry Christmas to you guys.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Dave Grendel, Vice Mayor
SECONDER:	Kathleen Kapusta, Councilperson
AYES:	Grendel, Narduzzi, Trakas, Kapusta, Veverka, Walchanowicz, Synek

ANY OTHER MATTERS

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think that covers everything Mayor.

Councilperson Trakas said just a point of personal privilege, I was wondering if we might be able to give Kenn and Kathleen a moment to address the citizens and ourselves if they would like to. I know Mayor Kurtz had some wonderful words for them the other night, and I think that's a courtesy we usually extend to outgoing members. Given the situation with Zoom, I think we do things a little bit differently, but I thought perhaps it might be appropriate.

Vice Mayor Grendel said Jim you make a great point. Usually, we give our reports, and then during our report is when you make your comments. So, I will let the senior member of Council, Kathleen, what comments you would like to give.

Councilperson Kapusta said that's a nice way of saying the old member, thanks Dave.

It has just been an amazing opportunity. I have enjoyed every minute of it, even the difficult moments of it because I have felt that I have had a great group of individuals, both past and present in Council to work with. I relish when we don't all go down the same path because it gets us all to thinking, and it's a creative process then and it gets us to questioning and I think that's where we have our growth. So, I think that's always been something that I have appreciated, the openness amongst the Council Members. I have appreciated the fact that we could have disagreements in our meeting and walk away and still respect each other for what we bring to the meeting.

From an administrative standpoint, both past and present, our Administration has always been very, very supportive. I have always felt that as a Councilperson, and I have appreciated that tremendously. The Administrative staff to be able to have that openness with our Administrative staff. As I talk to some of my friends who either have currently or in the past served in other municipalities on a Council, it doesn't always exist that way. It's like you are walled off from talking with some of the very key players that will help us to understand things that we are to be

voting on or making decisions on. I have never felt that here. I mean I think I had a little bit of an advantage because there were many of them who I worked with side-by-side for the 14 years or so that I worked in the City; but even beyond that, the new ones who have come on, that has been invaluable to just know that if you had a question you could go to them and you would get a response. I appreciate so much, I hope I never was too onerous in using their time because I know that they are very busy individuals, but whatever I was able to garner from them as far as additional information to make my decisions were very, very much appreciated.

I could single out a lot of people on the staff level, the team level, one sitting right at the top left of my screen there, Debi. I don't know what I would have done without her. I am sure that feeling is shared by many of us on Council, and the highest accolade I could give here is I still have a private practice that I run, and I said if I needed an Office Manager, I would have her there in a heartbeat because her excellence, her follow-through, her commitment to what she has done for us and continues to do for us as a Council and the City as a whole, it is just stellar. We all know, and hopefully she felt our appreciation with the bonus. We all know that she works above and beyond, and that too makes for an excellent path for us to go down. When I would write her a note or something or send her an email, I would say no hurry; but before the button was pushed, she was getting back to us. Again, it was that same way I think with so many. I know looking at Vern here and other staff, Maggie, other staff throughout the City, you always felt that they were part of your team; and they were going to do whatever they could to make our road easier and more accurate so that we could make our best decisions.

As I look back, one of the things that I did, I have two. I am still a paper person. You know that I write all the time. I have two four-drawer file cabinets in my den at home. I did this when I left my 11 years on the Board of Education, had a little bonfire in the backyard in our fire pit. Well, we had another one recently, and as I went through most of the papers from Council, a lot more papers. I will tell you guys, a lot more papers. As I went through those, and I always do that, I spent time looking through those, that's part of my process. I was proud of many, many things that we had worked. There were many things that we had worked on and brought to fruition through our efforts and of course as a team with our Administrative team. I was also frustrated, I will tell you that. I found back in 2014 a ton of work that we did about branding, and I was looking at that in preparation for today's meeting. Of course there were some other things with some of our area plans where I think they were so exciting, and we had so many good things there. I know we can't do it all at once, I respect and understand that, and I know that the last couple of years have just been about survival and getting through and re-orchestrating how we provide the services that we do, but that is always a little frustrating to me when I see things that I know we could do and need to do for our City and we always don't get to those.

Of course, the biggest one for me, and this goes way back to 2000 and even before that before I was even working for the City, and that is an alternative for our residents in terms of the housing. It becomes a battle every time, and I am saddened by that because I don't quite understand that. I can't grasp that. You heard me say probably 25 years ago I was invested in this and thinking about this, I had no personal stake in the game at that time. I was raising my young family, but I knew that it was something that we needed for our people. When I would see the angst that we would go through and the strife with our residents. That was probably the one thing that

saddened me because my husband always says that I could be a realtor but I only could sell real estate in Independence because I tell everybody how great we are and what we have to offer and we should all want to be here. He said that probably wouldn't work good with the rest of the world, and I know that even when we are in conversations with family or friends, I have to pull back sometimes because I don't want to be boastful, but I am because I think we have so much to offer.

When I look at what happened with our park and how that developed, and our pool is there and baseball diamonds, and my kids were beyond needing that at that time; but I was excited about that just as though, it didn't matter to me that it wasn't for my kids' generation. It matters because it was for our kids, the community kids, and I wish we could somehow engender that same feeling in our opposition group when we start to talk about alternate housing for people in the middle or later years of their life so that we can keep them here. I really believe, and I already mentioned this to the Mayor, so the rest of you on Council will be my witnesses, if you start moving forward in that direction, you better call me because I want to be involved again and I don't want to give that up. I feel so strongly about that.

What I know we have to do, and I just don't know how to do it, we have to get the yes people, the people who understand, the people who are supportive on board because I think like so many things in our town over the years, when something becomes an issue it's some of the people who are more oppositional and maybe more negative, if I could use that term, or more controversial, who come forward. The people who believe, who think this is a good way to go, and have questions, that's okay, have questions about it; but they don't always come forward. Somehow we have to engender their support to get them on because I think that's critical to do that.

All things being said, I don't want to take any more of your time other than to say, thank you, thank you to everyone. I am going to miss it, but it's time to move on to some other things, and I will keep watching you and supporting you. I just wish all the best in the years ahead. Thank you.

Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Kathleen, and you won't be a stranger. I know that from time to time I will be seeking your opinion, your advice because it's so valued, and your experience in being a School Board Member and a Council Member and also your work with the City and work with the seniors in the City too. You have a very good perspective of what this community needs, and we appreciate that very much.

Kenn, it is your chance.

Councilperson Synek said I'm going to be brief, I know the hour is drawing late, but in the Independence Post highlights, I extended my thanks to the residents and certainly to my wife for this foray into public life for 10 years, and being a pretty quiet introverted guy to be up on the public stage, and have been on it for 10 years, I am quite proud to be a part of that.

I have lived here all my life, and always followed what was going on in our City Council and City alike, and has always been connected to it and to have been on the frontlines for 10 years, it was a great experience and a real honor and privilege.

In particular, now that I am with elected officials here, I want to thank all of you for not only putting up with me as you have and my critical nature and need for facts and make decisions slowly and based on facts. I know I could wear you out at times, and I thank you with your patience with me over the last two years. I have dragged you through some things that you might otherwise wanted to go through, but I think through that process I hope I have shown you how it is possible to disagree and have different approaches to things and work through it collectively as a group. Our differences were never personal. They were always about issues, and I like and respect every single one of you. I take this opportunity now to thank you for your service because it takes somebody like me to know what it's like to serve in public life. Unless you are here, you can't begin to appreciate the challenges of it. You have to smile and put on a happy face, but you are dealing with tough stuff; and it's a lot easier to lose friends in this business than it is to make them. I thank you all for standing up and volunteering to serve because it's a grind. It's an honor to serve, but it's a grind, and many of you have done it for considerably longer than I have, and I don't know how you have done it for so long.

I am very sad to have lost the election. I hate to lose at anything even tiddlywinks, but by the same token, there is a lot of peace of mind and free time coming my way that I am really excited about. I know my wife is happy about it too because it's a grind. I will be watching. You do a great job, and I wish you nothing but happy trails in the future.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to work with you.

Vice Mayor Grendel said Kenn thank you very much, and again I speak on behalf of all of us, we appreciate all that you have brought to the table these last two years and your conscientious effort; and like you said, you stuck to your principles and we appreciate that very much. We appreciate you as an individual person as well as your family. Thank you Kenn.

Councilperson Kapusta said can I just say one more thing. Dave, I am sorry. It's something that Kenn said that sparked it.

One time I think it was one of our Zoom meetings, and I am sitting there thinking okay it's pretty apparent that I am the only woman on Council, no big deal; but I also, and I have to thank the residents for this. I also looked around the room, and of the nine elected officials who were there, I was the only one who was not born and raised in this town. That spoke volumes to me. That was like an epiphany. I looked at that, and I thought wow the people believed, now I have only been here 40 years, so I am still a newcomer, I lived with my parents and then with my husband and family. That to me, it took me aback, and I really have to thank the residents. For them to give that vote of confidence to me meant a lot, it really did.

I too only have one blood relative here who could vote for me to remember that guys. That is kind of little bit less than a lot of what you are able to have. I am appreciative, and I just wanted to say that.

Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Kathleen.

Mayor, that sums it up I think.

I wish everybody a healthy and happy new year. Please stay healthy, and Jim I hope you get

better. Everybody stay healthy the best you can and enjoy your family too. That's one thing I know that no matter how many precautions, it's tough, you just can't give away holidays like this because you have many more holidays, but everyone is precious. Please again enjoy it with your family, but stay safe and have a great holiday season. We look forward Mayor to hit the floor running come January.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you very much Vice Mayor, Members of Council.

Kathleen and Kenn, again I have summed it up many times, this was a great Council to work with. I never had to worry about people moving the ball, holding the rope or pulling it in the same direction, different angles maybe, but we were all pulling it for the betterment of the people of Independence, the people that work for the City of Independence, and the people that come through our City.

Again, I have said it repeatedly, thank you very much for the team effort that we put together. I think we moved the ball forward, and we will continue to do so for the betterment of our community and God Bless each and every one of you and thank you for your sacrifice and your service.

Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Mayor, and with that we will entertain a motion to adjourn.

Moved by Synek, seconded by Kapusta, to adjourn the Council workshop of December 16, 2021. Voice Vote: 7 yes/0 no; motion carried.

There being no further business, the Council workshop of December 16, 2021 was adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

Debra J. Beal, Clerk of Council

Minutes Unapproved at Time of Release December 20, 2021