



THE HEART OF CUYAHOGA COUNTY

**6800 Brecksville Road
Independence, Ohio 44131
216.524.4131**

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz
Members of Council

From: Finance Director Vernon Blaze

Date: Friday, December 22, 2023

Re: Finance Office and Related Topic Updates

Year-End Wrap-Up

A “thanks” goes out to Council for its 6–0 votes on both the final amendment to the 2023 Annual Appropriations Ordinance (Ordinance 2023-143) and the initial 2024 Annual Appropriations Ordinance (Ordinance 2023-144) at the Wednesday, December 20 Special Council Meeting.

The final amendment to the 2023 Annual Appropriations Ordinance will allow the Finance Office to close out 2023’s books on a positive note with all positive ending Fund Balances.

The initial 2024 Annual Appropriations Ordinance will allow the Finance Office to open for business on Tuesday, January 2, 2024.

Mayor Kurtz will likely schedule sessions with Council in early 2024 to:

Year-End Wrap-Up – Continued

1. Review the initial 2024 Annual Appropriations Ordinance in more detail
 - a. The General Fund and other Operating-Type expenditures
 - b. Departmental Capital Purchases
 - c. Infrastructure Projects

2. Review prospective Capital Purchases and Infrastructure Projects not only for 2024, but for the next few years too
 - a. Update the most recent version of the Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to craft a realistic plan to fund capital purchases and infrastructure projects for the time period 2025 – 2028 (as well as for 2024).

There is no shortage of things to do to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the City, but the saying “*Proper planning prevents poor performance*” is an excellent saying to keep in mind when starting out.

Changing circumstances necessitate that plans be very fluid and flexible to adjust and adapt to the most current reality that exists at any given point in time. But without a reference point to at least start with, an organization is without the necessary initial direction and guidance to move it forward.

Onward and upward in 2024 and beyond!

What Is Christmas All About?

Pastor Michael Sprague recently addressed this question by referencing a Charlie Brown Christmas.

In the initial showing of a Charlie Brown Christmas in 1965, Charlie Brown was already frustrated by the commercialization and distraction of the Christmas Holiday even back then.

He asked Linus somewhat rhetorically “*Isn’t there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?*”

What is Christmas all about? – Continued

Linus takes the stage with his ever-present blanket and recites the following from Luke Chapter 2:

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were afraid.

And the angel said unto them “Fear not: For behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this [shall be] a sign unto you: You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying “glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace and good will toward all.”

That’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.”

Pastor Sprague concludes with this keen observation:

“Linus’ blanket was, of course, a security blanket and his ever-present companion. In all the cartoons Linus was featured, he was never without it...except one time.

At the moment Linus was on stage and recites the words, “*Fear not...a Savior is born, which is Christ the Lord,*” he drops his precious blanket.

This wasn’t an accident. Charles Schultz, the Peanuts cartoon creator, was intentional.

The birth of Jesus separates us from our fears. May this be so for you too, my friends. Merry Christmas!”