



Gregory P. Kurtz

Mayor

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MAYOR KURTZ'S WEEKLY UPDATE FOR APRIL 30, 2021

Keeping You Informed

The City recently learned that the new owner of the Ramada Inn on Rockside Road (formerly the Crowne Plaza) has secured a contract with Lutheran Metropolitan Ministries (LMM) to rent hotel rooms to men who had previously been living at downtown homeless shelters. The City learned of this on the eve of when the men were to be relocated less than two weeks ago.

Under Ohio law, the owner is allowed to rent a room to an individual for up to 30 days. After that, the hotel room would be considered a “dwelling” which would put the owner in violation of state and City zoning laws.

My initial conversation with the owner was unsatisfactory at best. Along with my team -- including Police and Fire leadership – I met with representatives from Lutheran Metropolitan Ministries to discuss the situation, potential legal ramifications, and other safety and security issues this week.

During the 90-minute meeting, we pressed LMM representatives to determine how long they anticipated needing rooms, the type of medical screenings/services, job training, social services, security, maintenance, and efforts to find permanent housing they were providing to their constituents. LMM has agreed to provide answers to our questions and will have weekly calls with the Police Department to discuss any on-site issues or legal violations by the temporary residents.

I also made it clear that not advising the City about this move in advance was disrespectful to our community, safety forces, businesses, and other visitors.

Since last March, the Police Department has stepped up patrols around hotels and businesses in the Rockside Road area. This will continue as long as it is necessary. The City will enforce all laws fairly, equally and without bias to protect the rights of residents and other stakeholders. LMM is aware that all of their residents will be treated like any other public citizen and will be expected to abide by all laws.

The City continues to investigate all legal, jurisdictional, and zoning matters to ensure the hotel owner and LMM are in full compliance.

Cleveland Browns' Myles Garrett Surprises Independence Primary School

Cleveland Browns Myles Garrett delivered a memory of a lifetime to Independence Primary School students and staff this week. The Browns' defensive end made a surprise visit to see the Browns mural that fourth-graders created for their upcoming art show.



Garrett, who is fully vaccinated, congratulated the young artists and signed the mural above his image. He also provided an autographed helmet that will be auctioned at the Art Show on Thursday, May 13 at Elmwood Park. All proceeds will go to the school's art program. The show will feature more than 300 pieces of artwork created by the primary school students this past year.

The 18' x 10' mural was part of a three-week art class project for fourth graders featuring Browns' players Nick Chubb, Baker Mayfield and Myles Garrett, as well as Coach Stefanski.



Principal T.J. Ebert said he appreciated Garrett taking time out of his busy schedule to visit, especially ahead of the NFL Draft in downtown Cleveland. After a very challenging year, Mr. Ebert said, "Garrett's visit has ensured that students will not remember 2021 as "COVID year," but the year that Cleveland Browns' player Myles Garrett came to meet and thank the students."

Lock Your Vehicles and Homes

Police around Cuyahoga County report a recent uptick in vehicle thefts from streets and driveways similar to the activity that began last summer.

The brazen thieves typically target quiet neighborhoods in the middle of the night, looking for unlocked cars to steal valuable content like computers, cameras, and cash. Some thieves have actually found keys inside vehicles, and that's when they drive away.

Video doorbells shared on social media show how these operators quietly and methodically go around a neighborhood looking for easy targets – unlocked vehicles.

Police say these are crimes of opportunity and the best way to protect yourself is to ***lock your home, car(s), and garage every night.***

Covid-19 Vaccinations for Homebound Residents



This week a CDC assessment found fully-vaccinated adults 65 and older are 94% less likely to be hospitalized with COVID-19 than people of the same age who were not vaccinated. If that isn't one of the best reasons to get vaccinated, I don't know what is.

All Ohioans age 16 and older are eligible to get the COVID-19 vaccine at one of the state's several mass vaccination clinics, county health departments, local hospital sites or pharmacy.

For anyone who is homebound, it has been more challenging. Fortunately, the Cuyahoga County Board of Health is working on a program to provide in-home vaccinations for people who are homebound or are unable to travel due to health conditions.

As soon as the City receives more information on the in-home vaccination program, I will let residents know how they can sign-up for this important service.

Q&A's About Smart Meters

FirstEnergy's Ohio utilities – Ohio Edison, Toledo Edison and The Illuminating Company – are starting to install smart meters on customers' homes and businesses in several locations throughout our service area. This effort is part of a three year investment approved by



the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio to modernize the electric distribution system in Ohio with advanced automation equipment, real-time voltage controls and the installation of 700,000 smart meters.

This step toward a more modernized electric system will enable automated meter readings and may enhance our ability to respond to outages faster and more efficiently.

In the future, residents will have access to more detailed energy information through FirstEnergy's online Home Energy Analyzer tool that will help people better understand their electricity use and make informed decisions on how to manage and control electricity consumption.

Exchanging your current meter with a smart meter takes very little time and even less effort from you. In fact, if your meter is readily accessible, you may not even need to be there when it occurs. Be assured that the smart meter technology being implemented has been rigorously tested and proven by manufacturers to be accurate, safe and secure in systems throughout the country. Here are some frequently asked questions:

Q. What is a smart meter?

A. A smart meter is a digital electric meter that collects electricity usage information and sends that data to the local utility provider through a secure telecommunications connection.

Q. What if I don't want a smart meter?

A. Please call us at 855-344-3400 (Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) to discuss your options and get answers to your questions regarding the smart meter program and the installation of the new meter.

Q. When will a smart meter be installed on my home/business?

A. In the next few weeks, you will receive a letter from FirstEnergy that will give you the time period when they will be in your area to exchange your meter. Installers from First Energy or their vendor – Wellington Energy -- will follow all appropriate social distancing guidelines.

Please visit the FirstEnergy website at firstenergycorp.com/Ohiosmartmeter or call us at 855-344-3400 with any questions or concerns.

City-Wide Garage Sale

Registration for the first-ever, City-Wide Garage Sale on June 24, 25 and 26 is in full swing. Residents have until Thursday, June 17 to register their garage sale. There is more information in the **May Community Spotlight** (pg. 8) or you can email Community Services at CS@IndependenceOhio.org , call 216-524-7373, or stop in at the Civic Center.

Hometown Hero Celebrates 101st Birthday!



It was my honor and privilege to wish John Fabish a Happy Birthday on Tuesday, April 27 when he turned 101!

A World War II veteran, Mr. Fabish enlisted in the Army Air Corp (now the Air Force) in 1942. Initially he was stationed in South Carolina where he built B-25 bombers. Five of the planes he worked on were part of the Tokyo Raid by the United States following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Later, as a Crew Chief, Fabish served in North Africa, Sicily, Corsica, Rome, Germany, France, Belgium and Austria before coming home to Cleveland in 1947.

Soon after returning, he met his late wife Margaret “Marge” at a dance at St. Stanislaus Church. They were married for 69 years and raised three sons – Ron, Don and Jerry.

When I asked Mr. Fabish how old he felt on his 101st birthday, he said, “I feel good, like I’m 75!” God Bless you and your family and best wishes for continued good health, Mr. Fabish.



Happy Arbor Day!



The City took part in the Arbor Day Foundation’s “Community Tree Recovery” program again this year by delivering tree seedlings to the Independence Primary School and St. Michael School on Friday. Every year students plant these trees in their yards in honor of Arbor Day. All the trees were provided by the National Arbor Day Foundation and the Cuyahoga County Soil & Water District.

I was proud to present Father John Mullee, pastor at St. Michael Parish with seedlings at City Hall on Friday.

Finance Director Vern Blaze's Weekly Report for April 30, 2021 can be [downloaded here.](#)

Celebrating Cinco de Mayo

Cinco de Mayo, or the fifth of May, is a holiday that marks the date in 1862 when the Mexican Army declared victory over France at the Battle of Puebla during the Franco-Mexican War. While it is a relatively minor holiday in Mexico, in the United States Cinco de Mayo has evolved into a celebration of Mexican culture and heritage.

Community Services commemorated the holiday by hosting two junior chef classes on Friday, April 23. The twelve young people learned how to make seven-layer dip, chicken quesadillas, churros, and fancy lemonade with sugar rims. They also listened to Mexican music as they ate the delicious meal they prepared.



Safety Town

A malfunctioning traffic light and pedestrian crossing signals in Safety Town have been repaired and new LED bright bulbs are installed. Safety Town plays a big part in educating our young children to the importance of obeying traffic laws.



Saturday Is Community Shred Day



A reminder to residents, Community Shred Day is **Saturday, May 1 from 9 AM to noon or until 12,000 pounds of paper have been collected.**

The Absolute Shred Truck will be parked outside City Hall and all documents are shred on site.

Don't miss this opportunity to safely discard unnecessary papers that are taking up space in your closet, basement, garage or attic. No need to remove staples or small paper clips. **There is an 8 box/bag limit per household.**



Signing up for **Mayor Kurtz's Weekly Update email** is easy! Simply email your name and email address to CityHall@IndependenceOhio.org.