

STREETS & SIDEWALKS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

April 15, 2019

The April 15, 2019 meeting of the Ravenna City Streets & Sidewalks Committee was called to order at 5:39 P.M. by Chairman, Matt Harper. In attendance were Paul Moskun, Rob Kairis, Amy Michael, Bruce Ribelin, Scott Rainone, Andrew Kluge and Joe Bica. Also attending the meeting were Mayor Frank Seman; Finance Director, Kimble Cecora; Director of Public Service, Kay Dubinsky; City Engineer, Bob Finney; Police Chief Jeff Wallis; Fire Chief, Geoffrey Cleveland; Larry Silenius of 123 North Walnut Street, Ravenna, Ohio; Clifford Soudil of 434 Woodland Street, Ravenna, Ohio; Tim Calfee of 910 Murray Avenue, Ravenna, Ohio; Dick Bilotto of 333 North Prospect Street, Sharon Spencer of 131 North Scranton Street, Ravenna, Ohio; Kim Veon of 323 North Prospect Street, Ravenna, Ohio and Don Everett of 169 North Meridian Street, Ravenna, Ohio.

Mr. Harper said the first item on the agenda is a presentation by Don Everett regarding Park Way.

Mr. Everett gave a presentation showing drawings of a proposal for the downtown on Park Way. He was chosen to go to Houston, Texas with Eric Hummel for a CLI Convention. While he was there he had the opportunity to talk with many people from various communities. He asked what makes their community successful and two items that came up over and over again. Those are public art and green space in the downtown area. Thanks to the grant of \$4,000.00 which was approved today, they are in the process of doing at least six murals by September 14. That is the Saturday before the Balloon A Fair. They would like to have live entertainment on Park Way on Fridays from 11:00 AM until 1:00 PM. The brick and mortar restaurants in the downtown would have special lunches for that day. They considered using food trucks but would really like to support those businesses. There will be tables and a small stage. The entertainment will be working for tips only. This proposal would be a self-supporting venture. The space can be rented out for events. Ted Manfress, whose business is on Park Way supports this venture.

Ms. Michael asked if there could be something on Fridays from 4:00 until 7:00 because then people who work during the day can come downtown.

Mr. Everett said there are two vendors working in tandem to get a temporary liquor license for events in that area. As they see it now, the only thing the City would be responsible for would be the paving of Park Way. They will be asking for donations to help with the cost of the renovation of the area. Mike Burner will be donating some time to make some of the furniture, tables, etc., so if small parties wanted to rent the space they would be able to do so. It's going to be well maintained and monitored so when those events where alcohol is served, there would be tickets of some kind. In the past the closing of Park Way had been discussed. They need something to draw people into the downtown area; from the movie theater up and into the downtown. There are 22,000 to 25,000 cars going down Main Street each and every week day. This would be the opportunity to have people stop and want to visit the area. This is already WiFi accessible. He read a book by the founder of Starbucks and found that people were willing to pay \$10.00 for a cup of coffee because they could have coffee and work on their laptops and this made for a sense of community. This could be Ravenna's answer to the sense of community. He reiterated that everyone he spoke with thought it was a great idea.

Mr. Ribelin said he thinks it is a beautiful plan and he really likes it. Originally they were going to close that area off and this is much nicer than it was originally.

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Mr. Everett explained the idea of a stage at the end for the musicians, which would be small, maybe enough room for a trio to play. He would really like to get this done by September 14 when the murals are unveiled. They now have six murals that will be put on the buildings. He's had people calling him asking how they can get in on the murals.

Discussion ensued regarding the three missing parking spaces which would be eliminated if this was done.

Further discussion ensued whether or not to vacate the road. Mr. Finney noted that it was probably not in the best interest of the City to vacate the road. If it isn't vacated, the road will still be owned by the City and the area could be closed down if it didn't work out or if at some point, it is needed.

Ms. Michael said she thinks this is absolutely beautiful. Nothing good ever comes easy. She loves the passion that's been put forth. She really thinks it could do a lot for the downtown. She is especially excited to see the stage area because so many times people have wanted to have concerts and have to go to the courthouse lawn and it's a little bit of a mess trying to get set up. Right there, there are so many opportunities for local musicians, etc. She likes it a lot.

Mr. Harper asked if Mr. Everett has any idea as to the capacity of individuals in that area.

Mr. Everett said there are 24 or 25 tables. He's had people asking to contribute benches asking that they have a plaque showing they donated. He really wanted to keep this low until he got a feeling as to how Council felt about it. To see these merchants banding together for one common cause, which is the betterment of the downtown area; he's never seen this in the 20+ years he's lived here. With permission, he would like to pursue this further.

Mr. Harper said this is a great presentation and he thinks they can all agree they need to do whatever they can to improve the downtown traffic.

Mr. Finney said there are different types of services they have to discuss. It could be as simple as painting an overlay type of scenario like tennis courts. He's just finding out about it.

It was the consensus of those present was that Mr. Everett had a good plan and the issue would stay in committee for further discussion.

Mayor Seman noted Mr. Everett is downtown nearly every day talking with the merchants and working on projects.

Mr. Harper asked if the street is closed and the three parking spots are removed, could there be continuous parking down Main Street.

Mr. Finney responded there is a bus pull off right there that needs to be considered.

Mayor Seman said he thinks the concern is that this is a drop off point for people to drop off handicap or elderly people.

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Mr. Harper said the next item on the agenda is a request to discuss the recycling rates and the community cleanup. A couple of bids were received. He met with Mayor Seman, Kimble Cecora and Kay Dubinsky where they have been trying to come up with additional funds for this program. Because the quote this year is significantly higher than years past, they were not having much luck coming up with funding. If there are any ideas or concerns, they are open to hearing them. He does know many people have been contacted by residents who are asking for the program. He knows the community would like to see this happen and it's just a matter of being able to fund it.

Mr. Kairis said that there was money budgeted but it was only \$20,000.00. The way he figured it could be afforded is if the money that was devoted to an economic development officer, as far as he can tell, they haven't hired anybody yet. If they took just the first quarter of that allocation which hasn't been spent, they are already up to \$32,500.00 which means they need just under \$15,000.00 to meet that quote. There is a sliding scale in that the longer they go without an economic development person, the money can be drawn from that line. If there isn't anyone hired by the middle of July, they will actually have enough money to meet that estimated cost. Given the fact that so many people have asked for this and it's a service he thinks the residents really value.

Mayor Seman asked what do they do next year when the economic development person is hired and that money is not available. How are they going to fund it for the following year?

Ms. Michael said originally they talked about having the spring cleanup every other year. A lot of people were expecting it to be this year because of what was said last year. She thinks they have to do something for the residents. If they can get creative, she is all for it.

Mayor Seman said the money that was budgeted wasn't that they just budgeted \$20,000.00. It was based on the revenues produced by the recycling account. They took the total revenues, what they pay to the county and what's left includes the limb pickup, the leaf pickup, the yard clippings and bags as well as the spring cleanup. It's all paid for out of the recycling fund. When they got done allocating money for all the other things, there was \$20,000.00 left. The thing they have to watch is they saw a general fund that at one time had \$2 million in it and over the years, because they spent more than what was coming in, the revenue did not sustain it and they ended up down to near bankruptcy. The community stepped up because the only way to stop the huge layoffs in Police and Fire was done by either fixing revenue or cut more. Mr. Bica had to live through it and was right about the fact that they were about out of money. He doesn't want to set these other things up that way. The county is going to add 25¢ this year. That raises \$15,000.00. If they want to sustain this every year, they either have to get more revenue or if they take it out of the General Fund, they need to keep in mind that's how it eventually ended up down to nothing.

Ms. Michael asked why the limb pickup is considered recycling.

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Mayor Seman said that's what it is. There are a lot of man hours taking that yard waste out to the composting facility, composting it and getting it ready to be given away to the community.

Ms. Michael asked if there is any way that function could be paid from somewhere else.

Mr. Bica said they used to do the opposite years ago. They'd take it out of the General Fund and then being creative putting it into the recycling fund because they had a revenue stream that was significantly positive. But now it's not.

Mr. Cecora said that although that is a function performed by the Street Department, there are a variety of functions they perform like Sewer, Storm; part of that yard waste and bags has always been a function of recycling. The tree limbs are part of the brush and bag issue. It's a labor intensive thing. It's not a certain amount per week. It's a fixed percentage to the wages earned in the Street Department, which comes from Sewer, Storm, Water and Recycling.

Mr. Kairis said he gets it and there's a history of having this for a long time. His recollection is that they didn't do it last year because no one bid it. He was surprised a couple of months ago when he was told there were some bids, one of which was a viable bid. Of course the cost has gone up. Then they said the money wasn't allocated. He's just there to say they can do it this year but within reason. It's not going to be without coming up with some extra money, probably. But will they do it next year? He doesn't know.

Mayor Seman said he just wants everyone to understand they can probably find a way to do it this year but he doesn't know if they can sustain it. They can look at possibly looking at a rotation of two wards one year and two the next. They might be able to get it lower that way.

Mr. Kairis noted that if they had more time to think through this they might be able to come up with creative alternatives.

Mayor Seman said they really need to decide this tonight. Conrad's said they were only available in April and May. They are looking at May. They need to call them and set it up to make sure they are still on board.

Mr. Moskun said that he's heard from residents that if the rate has to be increased, they would want to know in writing that the rate is going up so much for whatever reason.

Mayor Seman said that if they raise it 25¢ it will still be tight.

Mr. Rainone asked if the proposal by Mr. Kairis to reallocate money an option.

Mr. Cecora said that is a yes and no. The yes part is the General Fund component that can be used for anything. The no part is that there is a Water and Sewer component to it; proprietary funds are being used for recycling cannot be done, by law. Anything above the \$20,000.00 already in the Recycling Fund would need to come from the General Fund only.

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Ms. Michael said maybe they could raise it the extra 25¢ and have it every other year. This year, she thinks they really need to do it. Maybe on alternate years they could put dumpsters out.

Mayor Seman said that unless someone is stationed at the dumpster, there is no control over what people throw into them. If they throw tires and batteries in, then the City will have to pay extra to get rid of those.

Mr. Ribelin noted then people from all over the county will be coming in and putting their junk and garbage in. Rootstown had to stop doing it because people from all over were dumping stuff.

Mr. Moskun noted that there would probably be a lot of overtime paid for employees to stand by and just watch the dumpsters.

Ms. Dubinsky said Portage County Solid Waste won't take the batteries or paint so what would they do with that stuff when it's dumped in there. Haulers will only pick up paint if it's been completely dried out or the container is empty.

Mr. Harper said the quote for this year is \$47,229.50 but that could be more or could be less. It's really based on tonnage.

Ms. Dubinsky said that the cost went up by \$32.00 a ton from 2017.

Mr. Cecora said that the money from the Economic Development person would be \$12,500.00 for the first half of the year so they'll need another \$17,500.00 just to make the quoted amount.

Mayor Seman noted he thinks the feeling is they want to do it again this year but they'll have to find a way to pay for it. It will need to be addressed early on as to how to do it in the future.

The clerk noted that they still have on hold, the 25¢ increase for the county. Do they want to add another 25¢ to that or do they want to wait? The costs to the city will be increased on July 1. The cost will also go up another 25¢ next year due to the county raising its rates. After that, it's anybody's guess as to how much the recycling rate will be.

Mr. Harper asked if the residents are willing to pay that amount in order to continue this program and maybe more than that in the future if they want to keep the program; that's the question.

Ms. Dubinsky said that after 2020 there is no guarantee from the County as to what the rate is going to be and they don't know how much the increase will be. It could be much more.

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Mayor Seman said that the recycling world is in a state of flux. Right now they are taking glass but have to pay to get rid of it. There is no market for them to sell the glass. He thinks they are going to see glass coming off the list by the end of the year.

Mr. Soudil asked if they could sell the compost material.

Mayor Seman said they have to turn that composting material over by 50% every year or they are in trouble with the EPA. They had to open it up to get rid of that 50%. They couldn't give it away.

Mr. Bica said they did look at selling it at one time and the law director said they can't sell it because there was a liability attached to it and it was a consumable.

Mayor Seman said he believes Mr. Dowdy looked into it and it wasn't lucrative enough to deal with the problems.

Mr. Moskun asked if they would let residents know by way of the water bill that the increase would be for the spring cleanup.

Ms. Michael said that if they raise that rate, they need to be able to give the people something for that rate increase and if they can't do it next year, there's going to be a problem.

Mr. Moskun reiterated he wants the residents to know why they are getting an increase. That way they know where the money is going.

Ms. Veon said if she's told they are going to increase the rate, she's fine with paying an increase. If they tell her she's getting an increase and they are going to pick up every two years and she pays that for two years and they don't pick up, she's going to be very dissatisfied. Even if the consumer is going to pay the bill, don't tell her where it's going because if they can't follow through in two years, it's just another increase.

Mr. Harper said it could become out of their control again when the carriers decide they don't want to do the pickup any more.

There being no further questions or comments, it was decided by those present that the issue be referred to the Committee of the Whole for further discussion.

Mr. Harper said the next item on the agenda is no parking on North Prospect Street. He knows there have been concerns in the past and they did try to relay the message that if someone is parking illegally, the Police Department should be contacted.

Ms. Dubinsky said they decided to keep the parking permitted on the east side only.

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Ms. Veon said she would prefer it to be kept on the east side. Then if that doesn't work out, make it no parking. There are two fire hydrants on the east side. There is only one house that parks on the west side, for the most part. People should know not to park in front of the fire hydrants.

Mr. Bilotto asked what the reason was for the discussion in the first place.

Mayor Seman said the project is ending and there were questions about the parking.

Mr. Bilotto asked why it wouldn't go back to where it was in the first place?

Mayor Seman said that people were assuming that with the fire hydrants on the other side, it would be moved. The city didn't make that same assumption, they just can't park in front of the fire hydrants.

Mr. Bilotto said there are a lot of streets throughout the city where parking is allowed on the hydrant sides.

Mr. Harper noted that if someone sees parking in front of hydrants or on the wrong side of the road, to please call the Police Department.

Mr. Harper said the last item on the agenda is roadway easement on North Chestnut Street.

Mr. Finney said the Chestnut Commerce Center has two roadway easements to the City of Ravenna running through the property. It's really strange. He is requesting to vacate the two roadway easements. One short section is along the cemetery. It might run 100 feet along the cemetery property line from Chestnut heading east then it stops and goes nowhere. The other section runs north from the cemetery property line toward the water tank and stops halfway through the property. With Mr. Harner's proposal for that property, these need to be vacated. There are no utilities in these two easements and they are not sure how or why they came into existence. He will send drawings tomorrow.

There being no further questions or comments, it was decided by those present that the issue be referred to the Committee of the Whole for further action.

There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 6:30 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

Matt Harper, Chairman
Streets & Sidewalks Committee