

STREETS & SIDEWALKS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

June 10, 2019

The June 10, 2019 meeting of the Ravenna City Streets & Sidewalks Committee was called to order at 6:16 P.M. by Chairman, Matt Harper. Present were: Amy Michael, Bruce Ribelin, Scott Rainone, Andrew Kluge and Joe Bica. Also attending the meeting were Mayor Frank Seman; Finance Director, Kimble Cecora; Fire Chief, Geoffrey Cleveland; Larry Silenius of 123 North Walnut Street, Ravenna, Ohio; Clifford Soudil of 434 Woodland Street, Ravenna, Ohio; Deena Tannert of 784 East Main Street, Ravenna, Ohio; Greg Francis of 558 Coolman Avenue, Ravenna, Ohio; Louis Dudek of 704 East Main Street, Ravenna, Ohio.

Mr. Harper said the one item on the agenda is the discussion of the spring cleanup fees and the recycling rates. The cost was higher than what was estimated.

Mr. Cecora said the spring cleanup fees ended up at \$53,000.00. There was already \$20,000.00 in the recycling fund. He circulated a tracking sheet requesting \$33,000.00 for the balance of that. They knew there would be some backend savings because of the Economic Development Director position. The longer that is put off, the more built-in savings is going to be. The anticipated about \$8,000.00 to \$10,000.00 out of pocket. A spreadsheet has been distributed that shows what they are talking about, assuming there is a 25¢ Portage County Solid Waste increase. It incrementally adds 25¢ per bill per month and it extends out to what the revised bill increase would be and also shows what the total bill would look like. They have a snapshot and visual of what a monthly recycling bill would be. More importantly, what percentage or amount of any increase would be to the City and, of course 25¢ is always going to be the Portage County Solid Waste increase. Below that, it shows the monthly revenue generated by that City increase; what the revenue is annualized and then the recycling fund right now is operating at a \$30,000.00 deficit per year. Any annualized revenues generated has to cover that \$30,000.00. Right now, the bill is \$4.75 per month. There will be an increase as of July 1 by the Portage County Solid Waste District of 25¢. That takes it to \$5.00. What above that \$5.00 will it look like?

Mr. Ribelin noted that there were two people in the other day who said they would gladly pay \$1.00 increase to continue the spring cleanup. He knows that's only two people. That was good feedback.

Ms. Michael said the other part of that is if they can't get someone to bid on the pickup. In years past, there has been nobody who wanted to do the job. If they don't have someone conduct the spring cleanup next year and they are going to charge additional money, they need to figure out a way of doing something; dumpsters or something. She thinks people will be really upset if they have no place to take their trash.

Mr. Cecora said that the spreadsheet shows a 2019 recycling fund operating deficit. They had about a \$30,000.00 operating deficit expense over revenue in the recycling fund. Built into that are leaf bags and only \$20,000.00 in the spring cleanup. Even without the spring cleanup, they are still driving a deficit.

The clerk noted that people aren't getting is what is included in the recycling fees. People in the audience are not aware of what services they get for that fee.

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Mr. Cecora said that the largest component is the pickup. They have leaf bags, grass clipping pickup and all the labor that goes along with it. It doesn't pick up itself. They charge part of the Street labor into recycling to cover it. It's becoming a primary function of the Street Department, they put a pro-rata portion (on a percentage basis) over to the recycling fund. That is the second largest expenditure in that fund. If they are doing \$350,000.00 in total revenues, they are talking \$65,000.00 to \$70,000.00 is the labor involved. What is picked up is pretty massive, it's brush, bags, etc. One of the big programs is the bags. Of course, the bags and labor are interconnected. The labor is constantly out there.

Mr. Rainone said that he thinks if they raise the rate, they are going to have to do some communicating just because anyone is going to see a rate increase as perceiving spring cleanup.

Mr. Cecora said that it's a combination of things. Spring cleanup took one for the team. That was the one item that could bring the budget back down to a manageable amount. You can't adjust the labor because people still need the bags and the brush picked up. You can't adjust the bags because that's part of the program. They can't adjust what the county charges. As these have taken on more costs, the revenue just isn't there to support it.

Ms. Tannert asked if they couldn't negotiate a contract with the hauler in that the city will agree to raise the rate for two years if they will agree to do the spring cleanup for the next two years.

Mr. Bica said that they should probably be more proactive in bidding it out earlier; starting to do it six months prior to the spring cleanup.

Mr. Rainone asked if it had to be annual or if they could get a two year commitment.

Mr. Bica said they could try a two year commitment.

Mr. Rainone said he likes that idea.

Mr. Harper said if they lock into a certain rate and it changes the following year, the hauler will end up losing money or breaking even.

Mr. Bica said he thinks the risk would be for the fuel.

Ms. Michael said the tipping fees have gone up. They have no way to know what those prices are going to be two years in advance. She did have a question in that she was questioned if the composting is in the recycling fee, why are the township residents permitted to get mulch and compost.

Mayor Seman said they are constrained as to how much they have to give away. It is required to give a certain amount of it away. Compost is nothing more than a byproduct of the pickup in front of their house. He thinks the township also drops off the stuff that needs to be composted.

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Mr. Cecora said the budget is \$302,000.00. The total expenditures so far this year are \$332,000.00. When they talk wages and benefits, that comes to over \$100,000.00. The collection expense payable to the County is \$150,000.00. The remainder is split out between leaf bags, other supplies, spring cleanup, tub grinding, transfer site maintenance, etc.

Mr. Ribelin said this isn't going to take care of the problem now, as far as this year's cleanup but the Budget Commission is coming up this month. It would probably be prudent to put that issue before the commission to put the money in for next year.

Mayor Seman said the County's increase starts July 1. They have to raise the rate, at very least that 25 cents. Action has to be take very quickly.

The clerk noted that a special council meeting will be held Monday, June 17 in order to pass legislation regarding the fees. That fee for the county is only going to be for this year. They will be adding another 25 cents onto that next year.

Mr. Soudil said he thinks they are always ready to put more money on the people as a tax but they don't want to manage the process. After watching that last four weeks, he noticed that they have to pay by the ton. It was not unusual for him to go by a known rental properties with eight to ten mattresses in front of them and other stuff, they just emptied out their basements. These people who are making money off these properties. He doesn't make any money off his property but he has to pay for it. He doesn't mind paying his \$5.00. But they aren't managing something here. They are just doing a free for all. Here, put anything you want out there. He saw tires out there. He knows they don't pick up tires so now they are still sitting out on some places. They need to manage this. They need to put a limit on what they can put out there. Maybe no mattresses. No building materials or blocks. There were cement blocks out there.

Mayor Seman said that the restrictions were put in the water bills.

Mr. Soudil said he knows they were out there and now they are gone.

Mayor Seman noted that he was surprised. He expected it to be under because it didn't seem to him there was that much out.

Mr. Soudil said that each one of those trucks that make it to the landfill, they get a weight ticket. Did they get those weight tickets?

Mayor Seman responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Cecora said that nearly all of the cost has to do with yard waste. They are still running \$10,000.00 a year in the hole and it's all driven by the yard waste.

Mr. Soudil said that not a whole lot of people understand that and they are going to have to at least put it in the paper or in the bills. He doesn't know how to do it.

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Mr. Bica said he thinks it shouldn't be too hard to show a pie graph illustrating the percentages and where the money is going.

Mr. Cecora said they came out of budget commission saying no bags. That morphed into \$20,000.00. There has been a demand for the spring cleanup and they'd love to see the tax dollars pay for it but it can't happen that way; not when they are running in a deficit.

Mr. Harper said that even with removing the Spring Cleanup from the budget, they are still running at a deficit.

Mr. Cecora responded in the affirmative saying it is about \$10,000.00. The idea was to come back with a rate matrix and see what they needed to do to plug the hole and what kind of margin do they need if they're going to do a full Spring Cleanup. In order to break even, they will need to raise the rate by \$1.50. But again, there is labor and what happens if there is a wage increase and it just keeps going. What are they comfortable at as a monthly recycling fee.

Ms. Michael said it frightens her to increase that much and what are they going to do if there isn't anybody to take the bid. Are they going to have a Plan B? If they are charging money for the Spring Cleanup, they can't help it if there are no bidders, but these people are going to expect someone to come and get their trash. Some communities do have to find a way to get people to take their trash to dumpsters.

Mr. Kluge asked if there is a way to put out a pie chart in the water bills so people can see where the money is going.

Mayor Seman said he believes that can be done.

Mr. Cecora said that they also need to look if there are no bidders on the Spring Cleanup. Where do they go from there?

Mr. Bica said that they have to understand that they are making a reasonable best effort to make that happen. There comes a point in time when they just have to ask, what do they do? They can't do it.

Mr. Dudek said there are records of what the rental properties are in Ravenna. What is to say their recycling rate isn't higher than a homeowner's recycling rate? If they want to bitch they just sell it and let somebody else worry about that or they suck it up and either pass it on to the renter or tack it onto their expenses. In a sense he understands but why not have them pay more?

Mr. Soudil said that dumpsters will not work as a dumpster itself. There is no way to do it. The only way to make dumpsters work is if you have X amount of dollars for the cleanup and guaranteed they are not going to be over. Advertise they will have a dumpster there from 9:00 AM until 1:00 PM on four Saturdays at one location until those things are full. He'll guarantee them by the time they tell people they have to take their crap there to get rid of it, they'll get half or less. Then he won't have to pay for it. There are other options as to how to manage this thing.

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Mr. Silenius said he thinks they should raise the rate for however long it will take to pay off the current Spring Cleanup. Then after it's paid off, they could cut the fee again. His other thought for the future is China has quit buying our recycling. Right now many of them, for instance glass, is just another form of trash that is piling up somewhere. No one is recycling it, actually. They may be talking about the county about there not even being recycling some of these things. They are just piling up somewhere.

Mayor Seman said Mr. Steiner from the Portage County Solid Waste District has said they are going to stop picking up glass. It is going to happen. The other thing they haven't talked about here is there is going to be a 25 cent increase over the next three years, with no promise that the increases will stay at 25 cents.

Mr. Bica said this is a black hold. The talked about it years ago and the right thing to do is to eliminate that bag and brush pickup. That is a lot. They continue to keep patching it up and doing these things over and over again.

Mayor Seman said the bags, people can go buy. What do they do with the brush? As they said, it they can't burn it.

Mr. Bica said they could call a private place, Davey or Dominic's, etc. and have them deal with the brush if they have large brush areas. He's just saying if they look at it in a logical perspective, this will not get better. It's going to get progressively worse.

Mayor Seman said when the bargaining unit contracts are negotiated this year, there will be an additional strain put on it.

Mr. Bica said a lot of the Workers' Comp. issues are dealing with these bags because the workers have to pick up these wet, heavy bags and throw them into the trucks. That is another component they don't even see behind it with injuries, etc. He just thinks they continue to band aid this.

Mayor Seman asked what they think about the yearly collection.

Mr. Bica said he thinks that is something nice they can do for the residents if they can get someone to bid on it. That's a big IF. The bags and brush are a constant drain and a huge liability on resources as well as funding. They should be doubling the cost. They looked at subcontracting it out at one time. They did look at where all of this stuff is going. The maintenance and operation of the grinding, the EPA regulations they have to adhere to, etc.

Mayor Seman said that every single bag has to be opened and the workers have to go through it.

Mr. Cecora said that if they did away with the bag and brush, it would be a self-correcting problem because the lion's share is labor.

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Mr. Bica asked what other communities do? He's pretty sure not all of them pick up bags and brush. When he tells people this community picks up bags and brush people are shocked. They should be looking at other communities.

The clerk said she could send out a survey of other communities to find out exactly what other communities do.

Mr. Kluge said that in doing a quick search, Ravenna is not the only community that does brush pickup. Kent does charge for a bag service.

Mr. Cecora noted that this past year the bags were \$17,000.00.

It was the consensus of those present that the recycling fee would be raised by 75 cents and they can look at the issues as they go along. The total bill for recycling will be \$5.50 per month.

Mr. Cecora said that if they build the budget as it stands with this increase, they still will not have enough money for the 2020 Spring Cleanup if they choose to do so.

Mr. Ribelin said that he would like to complain, again, about the two block area of road where he lives. He thinks they got short changed on the road levy. He says this because it's supposed to be chip sealed. He doesn't see any chips sticking to it. All he sees is what was there before and all the chips are on the tree lawn. There are some big dips and holes developing in it. Some of the pavement is already cracking up. He was told before that the chip seal would last five years. It's going to last about five minutes. It is trashed. He appreciates that the sweeper came up and swept the road off, etc., but basically it just swept more into the tree lawn.

Mr. Harper said he would follow up with Mr. Finney to see if there was any kind of warranty on that work and go from there.

Mr. Dudek said there is an area on Sycamore Street by the Catholic Church where the sidewalk is in a bad way. He thought he asked one time to see if the City was going to do it or not do it. He has not heard back.

Mr. Harper said he spoke with Mr. Finney who has not given him an answer at this point. Is he looking to have the sidewalk replaced?

Mr. Dudek said he just thinks they need to replace or fix the areas that are, at a certain point, going toward Main. When there is a funeral service, when the hearses are parked there and then take the person out and the pallbearers walk. They are walking over the sidewalk and if they aren't familiar with it, there is a chance they might stumble.

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The clerk explained that the law states the sidewalks are the responsibility of the property owners.

Mr. Dudek said he thought there were funds available for a program for sidewalks.

The clerk said there is a sidewalk program where the City will pay for the concrete and the property owner is responsible for installing it.

Mr. Harper said he will follow up with Mr. Finney to see if there are any funds available.

Mayor Seman said they used to use the Formula Grant monies to do those programs. That was in the neighborhood of \$50,000.00. That was a number of years ago. The Formula Grant has disappeared. The City no longer receives those funds. It now goes to the County. There is no specific fund just for sidewalks. When they write grants, they try to write sidewalks into the applications. He will find out about the answer.

Mr. Dudek said he went to the Service Director's office and there is a tree in his tree lawn on Freedom Street. There is a limb in that tree that is hitting the cable coming into his house. He asked them to look into whether it's a city issue or not. The tree is in the tree lawn. He was assured that it would be cut. It has been four weeks. He talked with Julie.

Mayor Seman said that no one is here to answer that question at this time but he would check tomorrow. He hasn't heard about it previously. It may be that the tree trimming folks are backed up due to all of the bad weather they've been experiencing.

Mr. Dudek said another thing is that he has noticed a lot of people parking cars over sidewalks. There are cars parked in tree lawns that probably shouldn't be there either.

Mayor Seman said they've been working on that for the past two weeks.

Mr. Dudek asked how they are working on it.

Mayor Seman said the property maintenance people deliver notices that they are not allowed to do it. They then follow up with it. He had one that he told the police to go ticket.

Mr. Dudek asked why don't the police stop and just knock on the door and say the car has to get moved. They don't have to ticket them.

Mayor Seman said that after he talked to the person and asked them to take care of it. He goes by the next day and it's still there, they put a ticket on it. They deal with this every day.

Mr. Dudek asked if they talk to the police chief about it?

Mayor Seman responded the police chief is part of the discussion.

He's just asking because he doesn't know what the procedures are that they are doing.

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Mr. Harper said that there is a process and unfortunately, sometimes they take a little bit of time. By the time they get the complaint and react to it, trying to get a resident to comply, etc.

Mr. Dudek asked why they send notices.

Mr. Harper said that it's a curtesy.

Mr. Dudek said the curtesy could be someone just stop and knock on the door.

Mr. Kluge said that asking an officer to walk up to a door in a blind situation, could be a problem. Property Maintenance could be a softer approach. He understands where Mr. Dudek is coming from and asked if there is one particular area that he is concerned about. They did hear all about Scranton Street problem.

Mr. Harper said that the problem is citywide.

Mayor Seman said he's been out driving around every day.

Mr. Dudek said on Riddle and Murray had two cars on the tree, facing the wrong direction for three weeks.

Mr. Soudil said they are basically not tagged and the police drive by every day.

There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 7:06 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

Matt Harper, Chairman
Streets & Sidewalks Committee