

DRAFT
CITY OF UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, OHIO
COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
March 10, 2022

Vice Mayor Michele Weiss called the meeting to order. All Council members were present:

Barbara Blankfeld
Christopher Cooney
Justin Gould
Brian King
John Rach
Sheri Sax
Michele Weiss
Also present: Kelly Thomas, Clerk of Council

Mrs. Weiss stated that the purpose of this meeting/retreat is to discuss long-term visions for the next two to four years. Each committee will use large post-it notes to list ideas. She pointed out that these ideas could be for a council person or for the city to accomplish. Once everyone has completed the goals, each committee's comments will be consolidated and Vice Mayor Weiss stated she would summarize and send to everyone. The results can serve as a guidebook on how the next years could proceed. Extensive brainstorming and sharing of ideas followed as listed below not necessarily in order.

Councilman John Rach, Chairman of the Economic Development Committee, stated that he is pleased that communication has improved between the Fire and Police departments, that tours of the fire department have been offered. This should continue so that the residents can get excited about what we have. Fall Fest was mentioned as a plus. Communication with residents is encouraged, expounding on what the city has to offer, and "showing off" awesome equipment. It was mentioned that Fall Fest is a plus and the hope is to involve more residents with the City.

Mention was made of the city becoming a bike friendly community. Mrs. Weiss recalled that a few years ago police officers were on bikes in the city and provided coupons to those children who were wearing safety helmets as a positive gesture.

The northwest portion of the city, particularly the Jackson Road area, was discussed. It was noted that the area does not get enough attention, that there are safety issues which have been voiced by the residents who live in the area bordering Cleveland Heights. Also included in the northwest area is the area where Sherwin Williams and other businesses are located.

It was noted that homeowners spend thousands to maintain their beautiful homes and are surrounded by out-of-state landlords with rental properties. Mrs. Sax noted she had visited the area and learned that electricity service was often not working.

Mrs. Blankfeld, Chairperson of the Building and Housing Committee, would like to see more police officers in the area so that people would get to know the safety force. Reference was made to a “coffee in a cup” event where there was some mingling of neighbors sponsored by Jack’s Deli. It is unclear whether that still goes on and the consensus is that these kinds of activities should be rotated to different parts of the city and that there should be more police personnel involved.

It was mentioned that events like block parties involve a police cruiser and fire truck, but these are not often occurrences; it was reiterated that there need to be more police involvement to promote community awareness. Mrs. Sax stated that getting to know residents goes a long way in building trust and understanding.

Mrs. Sax, Chairperson of the Service and Utilities Committee, mentioned an annual report of the fire department which referred to revenue generated amounting to six figures. She stated that a contract had expired and wondered about same as it relates to revenue vis a vis EMS runs completed and the billing process. The contract was written in 2015; Finance Director Kennedy indicated that the contract expired in 2018. What is happening with it, Ms. Sax wondered. There was some discussion about insurance costs regarding ambulance services and when residents are self-pay, those fees can be negotiated.

Councilman Brian King, Chairman of Community Outreach Committee, addressed city streets and pointed out that there are different technologies that would not be detrimental to the streets. He noted that the fire department is against traditional speed bumps but there are now portable ones. He discussed the speeding in general and mentioned trouble spots in the city, including the intersections at Silsby and Belvoir. A roundabout was discussed, but it was felt after a review by the City Engineer that the area was too small for one at that location. Other traffic concerns were discussed at Silsby, Saybrook and Washington. It was noted that there had been a grant application for some of these troubled areas, but the city did not receive it. Roundabouts matters have to be assessed by the county.

Councilman Justin Gould, Chairman of the Safety Committee, also discussed Jackson, the **northwest section of the city** on the border of Cleveland Heights. He pointed out that it is not that the residents are getting less service, but because of the contiguous neighboring area nothing looks the same. He also noted concerns about vehicles speeding, debris on trash days, etc. Mr. Gould stated that block parties are coordinated with those residents, and complaints are often voiced.

Mrs. Weiss, Chairperson of the Finance Committee and the Council Committee of the Whole, suggested that the northwest corner of the city which includes **Jackson Boulevard**, should be reviewed by multiple committees and that the area could use beautification.

The need for updating **Sewers** in the city was discussed and it was pointed out that this should be addressed. It was pointed out that the type of sewers in the city would benefit from special grants. The county's master plan was mentioned with reference to sewers and other matters but seemingly no effective strategy is in place for the city. It was suggested that the city needs county and state advocates, noting that just because the city is smaller, the same needs exist as those for larger ones.

Councilman King discussed the possibility of a **City Planner**. The need for someone who concentrates on just grants/research was discussed, and the possibility of having a consultant, per diem, rather than a full-time city employee was addressed. **Curbs and sewers** were further discussed and emphasis placed on having these issues graded and put on a schedule as other large capital projects; some streets need new curbs and the question arose if whether when streets are resurfaced, curbs are included.

Mrs. Sax reported that she met with Shaker Heights regarding **recycling** and a meeting with Pepper Pike is scheduled. She described how other cities performed the recycling, the truck routes, what is picked up first, etc. Mrs. Sax provided comprehensive information about the challenges of trash collection and recycling. It was noted that some cities fine residents for not following established rules for collection and recycling. Mrs. Blankfeld agreed with Mrs. Sax that education is needed so that residents know how to recycle and the importance of same. Various rules of other cities were discussed and it was mentioned that there are funds available to retrofit equipment and grants are available.

Councilwoman Blankfeld noted that some hands-on service department employees have expressed interest in providing ways to re-work routes. Those ideas could possibly save labor and time if heard.

Councilman Rach addressed street lighting with **LED fixtures** It was pointed out that the city cannot replace burned out lights with LED; has to be done by the electric company. There are concerns about the glare/brightness of the LED lighting in front of residents' homes.

Mr. Rach also discussed a **sensible salt policy**, which needs to be reviewed. Currently, only main roads, intersections and hills are being salted, but this does not always work. Sidewalk plowing, the bombardiers and major crosswalks were discussed as well as the fact that tree lawns are ripped because of snow plows. The possibility of shared sidewalk improvements was discussed.

Finance Committee concerns were addressed regarding the city's budgeting process. The possibility of creating an ordinance requiring discussions with directors earlier in the year in September, for example, was discussed. Benchmarks are needed. The Finance Committee should be made aware of negotiations. It was pointed out that contracts are housed in the Finance Department. The importance of planning was discussed and the Finance Committee should be

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involved prior to action taken, rather than being presented with matters when practically in place. Communication is important to increase efficiency. The possibility of partnering with other communities on projects, such as senior services, was discussed.

The **Board of Zoning Appeals and the Architectural Board of Review** rules and regulations were discussed in terms of what residents need to do and which body they should apply to. Many of the rules and regulations are out-of-date. On that note, it was mentioned that Assistant Law Director Cicero has been working on updating many of the Housing and Building codes.

Mrs. Weiss stated that the Council Committee of the Whole needs a sub-committee on infrastructure and facilities, similar to the Citizens Advisory Committee, and that the committee needs to have representatives with expertise in the applicable areas, such as Councilman Rach, an architect well versed.

It was mentioned that **Signs** are included in the budget and there was a question of whether the contract has expired.

Mrs. Weiss noted that the Charter Review process will start soon and will last about six months.

Building and Housing matters were discussed. It was noted that the Clerk is doing BZA and Architectural Board of Review functions, which is too much, and this has not always been the practice. The issue of the contract with SafeBuilt was addressed, and the fact that for such a small city, the amount of work is excessive. It was mentioned that the Law Department is exploring rental codes and enforcement. There should be information relating to occupancy updated yearly, but there is a question of how that is being done currently.

Solar power was discussed by Mr. King; he noted that there is no renewable energy provision in the city's code and he was directed to the Architectural Board of Review for approval; this is something that should be standard. Existing tax credits funded by Department of Energy will expire this year. Councilwoman Sax is interested to know about the savings of solar power; Mr. King stated that it depends on the size of the home.

Historic Districts in the city to preserve housing stock that has architectural character at 100 years was discussed by Mr. Rach. He stated that there are credits available and that this is something that should be considered.

Councilman Chris Cooney, Chairman of the Recreation Committee, mentioned that the **pool** needs repair and that there are ten years left on the bond. The **Walter Stinson Park** bonds expire in 2029. Mr. Cooney stated that the concession stand operates at a loss and suggested that needs to change. He discussed research done on other cities regarding same.

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The issue of **Senior Services** was discussed. Mrs. Weiss mentioned that the program brought in to the library for seniors was very nice and it is thought that the communications director could do this easily. The city also partners for a driver, but this is not well utilized. Communication was stressed, and the fact that seniors need to be called to be made aware of services available. It was also suggested that the city partner with another city to share resources for senior residents..

Mrs. Weiss brought up the idea of having a **farmer's market** at Walter Stinson Park. She also suggested the possibility of **murals** in the city with kids painting; they could be from the CDC and/or Cleveland Heights art program.

The relationship between the **Board of Education** was mentioned. The **Memorial Day Parade** was also mentioned, with the suggestion that the route begin at John Carroll University.

Councilman King discussed the **technology committee and the RFP for outsourcing IT services**. It was noted that more reliability is needed now; the phone system has to be able to transfer to the cloud. There is \$45,000 allocated for repair and/or update the phone system.

Communication was stressed. It was suggested that there be a quarterly report in the **MOSAIC** for Council or a page.

A yearly interactive **Town Hall** was suggested which would give residents an opportunity to ask questions freely and interact with the city,

John Carroll University was mentioned. Mr. King met with student leaders; it was felt that those discussions should continue. It was also pointed out that the city can utilize JCU's facilities for a discounted price; the problem is parking and getting into available times, especially for senior citizens. Perhaps this can be worked on for **seniors** at some point.

Vice Mayor Weiss asked if the committee enjoyed this exercise; all did.

Submitted by,

Jeune Drayton
Assistant Clerk of Council

Council of the Whole

Short Term Action Items:

Implementation of signage

Charter Review

Formalize a sub Facilities and Infrastructure citizens committee including ARB and Planning volunteers

Grant Consultant for various projects

Who is our county/state advocate for UH for large infrastructure dollars

Building and Housing

Short Term Action Items:

POS inspection process finalize

Receivership ongoing

Move BZA and ARB meeting responsibilities to SafeBuilt as was done when in house

Complete a rental property enforcement process with the police and the Housing Director

Possible collaboration with solar power organizations

Tie in signage to make Historic Districts

-are there potential tax credits

NW neighborhood improvements

Community Outreach

Short Term Action Items:

Council communications more streamlined on social media

More community platforms for conversation

Bike friendly community

Involve JCU in more programming or vice versa

Senior service shared resources with other cities

A Council Mosaic Page

Tech Advisory

Short Term Action Items:

RFP for IT service contract

CLOUD

Upgrade phone system

Recreation

Short Term Action Items:

Discussion of possibly outsourcing concessions or at the minimum charging more

Sharing of senior services resources such as speakers

Farmers Market-trial

Murals-discuss with CHUH school district

Pickle Ball-easy transition for one court

Involved in summer concert series upgrades/changes for next season

Possible picnic pavillion at the Walt

Long Term Action Items:

Begin discussing pools life and what upgrades are needed and cost associated

Economic Development

Action items:

Zoning code update

Finance

Short Term Action Items:

Enforce a budget process timeline beginning in October

Quarterly Finance meetings to review financial statements

Put into ordinance large service contracts should be bid out not just capital projects

Long Term Action Items:

Be made aware of union negotiations before the final contract is negotiated

Strategic Planning Sub Committee

Short Term Action Items:

Process for signing a contract and execution

Create a written process for BZA , ARB and Planning

Safety

Short Term Action Items:

Collect EMS dues in tangent with an EMS contract

Speed

Round about on S Belvoir

Door to Door registry

NW neighborhood improvements

Spotlight meet the officers

Service and Utilities

Short Term Action Items:

Backyard recycling collection

- Recycling education and targeted awareness

- possible utilizing interns for door to door awareness

- implement best practices from Shaker and Pepper Pike to improve our process

Reassess the garbage routes from service staff and director

Joe Cuini to create a curb report card similar to the street report card

Cardboard drop off point in the city

Review sensible salt policy

Review sidewalk clearing with bombardier in conjunction with Safety

Shared sidewalk improvement program

Review leaf pickup procedures and timeline

Long Term Action Items:

Research specific grants for sewers - consultant