

**COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
CITY OF UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, OHIO  
MONDAY, MARCH 4, 2024**

Vice Mayor Michele Weiss called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Roll Call:**

Present: Mrs. Michele Weiss  
Mr. Christopher Cooney  
Mr. Brian King  
Ms. Threse Marshall  
Mr. John Rach  
Ms. Winifred Weizer

Absent: Mrs. Sheri Sax (present via zoom)

Also Present: Mayor Michael Brennan  
Clerk of Council Kelly Thomas  
Law Director Luke McConville  
Fire Chief Robert Perko  
Economic Development Director Susan Drucker  
Police Chief Dustin Rogers  
Service Director Allen Pennington

**MOTION BY MR. KING, SECONDED BY MR. RACH to excuse the absence of Council Member Sheri Sax. On roll call, all voted “aye.”**

**Approval of Council Minutes:**

There were no corrections to the February 20, 2024.

**MOTION BY MS. WEIZER, SECOND BY MRS. WEISS, to approve the Council minutes from February 20, 2024. On roll call, all voted “aye.”**

**Additional and Removals from the Agenda; Referrals to Committee:**

There were no additional additions or removals from the agenda.

**Comments from Audience**

Jim Outman, 3781 Westwood stated that last week, the question was raised, can University Heights afford its Juneteenth celebration? The better question is whether we can afford not to celebrate Juneteenth. This year, as last, even bigger and better. Comparisons to other events are irrelevant. Not all events are the same and they don't cost the same. Juneteenth is by rights a celebration by everyone to mark the day that the dream of America was delivered to the darkest corner of Dixie. Whether we celebrate with knish or kimchi, chitlins or calamari, whether we dance the horror or twist and shout, Juneteenth marks the day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, were able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, free at last, free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last. Why here and not in Pepper Pike or Moreland Hills? Because Juneteenth is our privilege and honor to host and thereby to state with the clarity that only money spent can claim. We, are one city, one city of different people living under the same idea. Can the city of University Heights afford to sponsor a Juneteenth celebration this year as we did last? Of course, we can. Our city can and does afford what we want to afford. Not least an extra \$500,000 every year for an antiquated and wildly inefficient backyard trash collection system. Not to mention a pay raise for banging the gap 20 times a year.

Cassandra Collier, resident of 39 years at 4446 Silsby. Mrs. Collier said that she was overjoyed when University Heights planned a Juneteenth celebration in 2022. Everyone should know our history. That President Lincoln announced that the Emancipation Proclamation would go into effect on January 1, 1863.

However, the final enforcement took place in Texas on June 19, 1865 and celebrations began in Texas on June 19, 1866. The celebrations were mainly church-centered gatherings because African Americans were not allowed into the community centers. All of this is important to Mrs. Collier because her parents were from the South and her parents grew up knowing about celebrating Juneteenth until they moved to Cleveland. However, Mrs. Collier and her siblings also grew up hearing and knowing all about Juneteenth with their own Juneteenth celebrations with cookouts and family that they called Children's Day. It seems like everyone can have their day in the sun except for my people. In fact, there seems to be an all-out effort in this country to squash what my history is all about. Could that be possibly happening in University Heights? So now I'm going to speak about the Juneteenth budget and the comments that accompanied the talk about the budget. Mrs. Collier continue and make the following quote. "In particular, this was said, and I quote, I don't understand why, why, and this is from the transcript, so it may sound weird. Why, why are we having security? I thought you knew, know what, what is planned about June and how many, what is planned about June that we need. It did say \$115,000 worth of security, but we have fall fest with lots of people, but we don't need \$15,000 worth of security. Is there something about June that we think is very unsafe? Is it the programming? What I mean, I looked at that and quite frankly, I have African American friends that when mentioned, when I mentioned it to, they were offended, that's offensive. I'm sorry it's offensive, end quote. And this discussion went on to someone in the next sentence talking about criminal activity. Mrs. Collier continued to state that she was offended because of the question about \$15,000 for security being related to unsafe programming. Did the members of the Finance Committee really want to know about the reason for the \$15,000 security costs or was there something else? Ms. Collier said she was asking because there was talk about why there was so much security needed at this particular event. and not all the rest of the events that occur pretty much weekly in the summer. Then it was said that the committee should not get performers that cost \$20,000 and then the security is \$20,000. Ms. Collier said that a lot of things that were said that she did not like and found offensive. And it came out of the mouths of people on the finance committee. This should not be a joint venture with another municipality. This is not a celebration that should be changed. They were talking about diversity days, this is not a diversity program, it's Juneteenth. No one celebrates or changes anyone else's celebrations or holidays. Ms. Collier said that she felt no respect here. To discuss Juneteenth in the same breath as unsafe programming to offended African Americans to criminal activity is a problem for her. Please show some respect to the people of color in this community. Juneteenth is a bona fide paid federal holiday. And it should be respected and treated for the day that it is. A day of celebration for African Americans who acknowledge that the struggle is real. Thank you.

Ms. Osie MayNeal, resident of Euclid but graduate of Cleveland Heights High School was present and representing Spread the Love Foundation. Which was one of the vendors from last year's University Heights Juneteenth celebration and their Board chairman is Anthony "Crazybone" Henderson, who was the headline talent for last year. Ms. MayNeal said that after watching the YouTube video that was posted from last week's City Council meeting, she was also taken aback by some of the comments; particularly about the \$15,000 needed for extra security. As a former public employee for the City of Cleveland, and being the special events and outreach manager for the Department of Public Utilities, which includes Cleveland Water, Cleveland Public Power, and Water Pollution Control she is very versed in special events, large special events, sponsorship, and what those costs can amount to, but also the return on investment for communities. Personally, Ms. MayNeal said that Spread the Love Foundation received so much attention, donations, and awareness from last year's event that it was very helpful for them with raising awareness and she was proud to be a part of the event last year.

Dr. Alicia Sloan, 3839 Hillbrook Road spoke and stated that after 400 plus years, plus another century and a half of systemic racism, we've (blacks) arrived here. And in that meeting (Council), our event was compared to that of Fall Fest and other recreational events. Dr. Sloan thought that was very demeaning, disrespectful, and diminishing of the event. It didn't take 400 years, plus another century and a half of racism to come up with Fall Fest. That was a beautiful idea. It was an event to bring the community together. It did, however, take that long for us (blacks) to become able to celebrate Juneteenth. So, I would advise, or ask, request, however you want to say it, to be a little bit more cognizant of the words that you let fall out of your mouth in regards to an event that celebrates a particular culture. On Juneteenth, we celebrate black people. It has nothing to do with diversity. We are celebrating black people. Diversity Day is a beautiful idea, just not a replacement for Juneteenth. We don't ask to be celebrated. We include everybody. We invite everybody to come and celebrate black freedom. I think that for people on this council that say that they work for us, I hope that means everybody. Everybody, not just a certain group of people. For the budget to be cut from about \$45,000 to \$10,000 from the city, speaks very differently to me when claiming to be working for us, me, including with everybody. I just hope that the idea of Juneteenth will not be compared to another recreational event when it did not take 400 plus years to get to where we are.

Reverend Dr. Vincent E. Stokes II, 3641 Washington Boulevard - I did hear the comments made last week. I was not offended because how I took the comments were we (city) didn't have the money or the resources to be able to continue to have this event on this caliber. But I want to encourage you to think about it from the perspective of me, a black man. It's real hard to be black in America. Just walking out my front door, I already have a mark on me. I'm black. I can't change it. It's not just me. I have two children, a six-year-old and a 19-year-old. When they walk out the door, they're black. So, when you have an event like Juneteenth, that event tells the blackness of me that in this city, I have some type of relevance and importance for me. And I want to encourage you to continue to fund this event on these levels because you have an entire demographic of people who live in this city who, as in living in this country, have been overlooked, have been degraded, have been cast down. It's all been done in the name of expediency or in the name of we don't have the money. But we have money for what we want money for. And the reality is that we need to have money for this. And I'm going to end with this and say, people want black people's rhythm. But they don't want to take our blues. And that's one of the problems that we have right now. If you want our rhythm, you've got to be willing to take the blues that come with being black as well.

Ms. Faye Benson, 3621 Cedarbrook Road, stated that she listened to the Finance Committee's meeting from last week and was shocked and appalled by the statements that were made. Because, as a black person, she knows what it is to live in America and has been racially profiled in this city. But more importantly, she wants the Juneteenth's celebration to be about everyone in this city. And that is her mission, on that day, to walk around and ask everyone that comes in that park to come back and celebrate. It doesn't matter what color you are. It's a celebration about freedom and democracy, and peace and love and harmony. That's what it's about.

Mr. Michael Maliskas, 2592 University Boulevard stated that he had come to a Council meeting last year to thank Council for approving the funds for Juneteenth. It was a wonderful celebration, which he was glad to attend. Mr. Maliskas said that he understood the need to balance a budget and that he agreed completely that it doesn't make sense for a small city like ours to be spending more than we take in. So, he had no problem with the discussion. Tough cuts have to be made. And if Juneteenth is one of those that has to take the tough cuts, it's okay. What really bothered Mr. Maliskas was regarding some of the comments, as so many people already mentioned. But two in particular. One, asking why should Juneteenth be the premier event in University Heights? Why shouldn't it be? It already is. Last year there were more people at Juneteenth than there was at all of the summer concert series combined. The second one, maybe even worse, is that it's not for everyone. Why isn't it for everyone? Mr. Maliskas asked the people who have made that statement to explain to him why Juneteenth is not for everyone. It is for everyone. And the only reason you could be saying that is because you have an axe to grind against that event in particular. That same comment was not made about the Memorial Day Parade. It wasn't made about summer concert series. It wasn't made about Fall Fest. It was only made about a single event. The most well attended event in the entire city.

Mr. Xavier Allen, 2351 Ashurst Road. Stated that he understood financial constraints. These challenges, tough decisions have got to be made. Listening to the record of the meeting. Mr. Allen said his big concern was something he did not feel like they were all confronting here. Juneteenth, you may know the story at the beginning, but Juneteenth belongs to everyone. This is an American celebration. This is an opportunity where we are investing in culture. We are investing in our community and that takes hard work. Juneteenth is not something that is just for him as an African American man. Mr. Allen thought it would have benefited to really get into the nuts and bolts of, you know, why those costs are where they are. What that event brings. Let's do a cost-benefit analysis of what that brings to the community. Spending money in our community to enjoy a day with our community. You can't measure that. However, there's something to be gained by partnering and investing more in how we curate the event, if that's your concern. We are all big men and women. Big boys and girls. We can have an honest conversation. Let's talk about that. Mr. Allen added that he was very concerned if we the budget is cut as massively as what it sounded like, we may get something that none of us want. Investment in culture, investment in community, our children will see that. We feel where investment happens.

Seeing no other audience comments Mrs. Weiss read an email received from Rebecca Slifer on Traymore. I hope this note finds you in good health and good spirits. I'm writing to ask if the University has been contacted by or in communication with the Brennan administration or anyone on the safety directors' team as St. Patrick's Day is fast approaching. It's safe to assume that people will likely begin celebrating St. Patrick's Day on Friday, March 15th. And the festivities will continue to Sunday, March 17th. My hope is that the City and the University are working together to make sure that the appropriate safety measures are in place for your campus. The students who live in the community who often host parties and the residents of UH. I want to be confident that the city leadership has a plan in place to prevent property

damage and to curb disorderly behavior in the community near campus. Unfortunately, I foolishly made the assumption last year and on March 18th was not only greeted by city streets filled with litter but also snow. One can only imagine the mess that our city service professionals had to clean up. I'm confident in reading of the city ordinance which indicates that the laws in place are sufficient to provide the police to act to stop property damage, detain people exhibiting public drunk and disorderly conduct, and to write citations for littering on public property. I'd hope that these same rules govern the operations on campus. I know that Mayor Brennan takes great pride in serving on the NOACA board and in other initiatives that consider our environment and that will enhance and maintain UH civic pride. As a taxpayer, it's my expectation that the person responsible for the safety of the city and protection of the people who live here and their property have a plan in place and that our city leadership has communicated that plan to you to share with the university. Thank you.

Seeing that there was one more comment from the audience Mrs. Weiss gave the floor to Mr. Engelbrecht.

Geoff Engelbrecht, Housing and Community Development Director for the City of University Heights. I would like to address some of the comments made during the most recent budget hearing meeting concerning the city's Juneteenth celebration. When comments during the meeting such as, "why is Juneteenth the premier event that University Heights is putting up?" or "Fall Fest is a full community event. All of these are community events, but Fall Fest has a broader scope and a broader base that it attracts from," or, "diversity encompasses a lot more. Maybe we could change it into a diversity day.

We could do a lot more with programming I was angered to say the least. City's Juneteenth celebration committee was formed so that the city's celebration truly came from the grassroots up and would be like no other in the Cleveland region and possibly within the state of Ohio as well. The committee has consisted of neighborhood residents, small business owners, and volunteers who have given their time, energy, and devotion towards creating a celebration which every resident within University Heights could enjoy. As a celebration, it's the perfect way for the city to showcase itself and say to outsiders who may come, hey, come see our community, come see our neighborhoods, come see our business districts, how walkable the city is, how accessible it is via mass transit, how short of a distance it is to University Circle, which is actually the fourth largest employment center in the state. And maybe, just maybe, people who come to the event would make the decision to move here, start a business here, put down roots here in the community. The events taking place during the celebration are discussed and debated within the committee by members of this community, business owners and volunteers, and open to any, any, who would like to join. So, it's angering to hear it be asked why Juneteenth is the primary event that University Heights is putting up. My question in response to that is, why not? The Juneteenth is now, rightfully so, a national holiday and deserving of celebration. The committee took the celebration as a chance to not only commemorate the ending of slavery in the United States on June 19th, 1865, but to also celebrate black creativity, awareness, art, leadership, history, culture, and beauty. Last year's event showcased members of the Divine Nine, Zumba instructors, jazz bands, gospel, fitness, a discussion on issues affecting the black community, financial literacy talks, health and wellness, was emceed by Keira Cotton of WKYC, was DJed by Marcus Allen Ward, and had multiple local hip-hop artists celebrating the 50th anniversary of the culture of hip-hop, including one-time, or one two-time, Grammy Award winner Crazy Bone.

And thanks to the committee and all of the planning, last year's celebration became one of regional significance within only its second year. So it's angering to hear it be said, you know, Fall Fest is a full community event, all of these are community events, but Fall Fest has a broader scope and a broader base that it attracts from. To that I would ask, what is it about Juneteenth, now a national holiday, that makes you feel as though Fall Fest would have a broader scope and base? When everyone is welcome to the city's Juneteenth celebration. Over 4,000 people joined us that day, last year, for Juneteenth, dwarfing any other event at Walter Stinson Community Park, including Fall Fest. Through planning, we even chose to hold the celebration on a Sunday, every year, so that members of different faiths would have the ability to come join us for the celebration, since it's a holiday to be celebrated by everyone. The choice to celebrate Fall Fest for quote-unquote diversity over Juneteenth is a personal choice, I don't think it's more than that.

And it's also angering for it to be said, diversity encompasses a lot more, maybe we could change it to a diversity day, we could do a lot more with programming. To that I challenge you, challenge everyone, to find a local celebration in the Cleveland region, even Fall Fest here, which encompassed everything that Juneteenth did here in 2023. This is again, thanks to the residents and small business owners who took part, and are taking part in planning the celebration this year. Last year's budget rose after consultants' last-minute recommendations for security, along with the Cuyahoga County Health Department's recommendations for portable toilets and sinks came in after the budget was already finalized. The rise pointed to the number of people who could potentially come to the event, nothing more. It didn't point to any type of danger, or anything else that one may try to tie solely to the black community through prejudice. It pointed to what became a regional celebration where people who would come all the way from Pittsburgh to University Heights for the celebration would be left with a lasting great impression on them and everyone else who came. That didn't happen for Fall Fest, it happened for Juneteenth.

Celebration became a way to truly showcase the city, our unity, and our diversity. So much so that the city just received a \$10,000 donation from Dollar Bank because they felt it was a growing celebration and they wanted to be part of it. But not so that they could pay for half of the budget for the event. That's not what they wanted to see to happen. So, in closing, I'll end with this. Juneteenth is for everyone. All are welcome to join us. All can take part in the celebration. All can learn about American history, or more about American history. And all should.

### **Reports and Communications from the Mayor, and the taking of action thereon:**

#### **Mayor's Report**

I'd like to begin by thanking everyone from the public who came here this evening to state their views on our community's Juneteenth celebration.

As long as I've had the privilege of being mayor I have sought to be everyone's mayor. When we say that University Heights is a diverse mosaic, that shouldn't just be marketing or public relations, that shouldn't just be a sign at our city limits or a logo on our letterhead.

There are at least five distinct groups of folks in our city and I'm the mayor for all of them. There's the Jewish and Orthodox Jewish community and I am your mayor. There is the Catholic community, and I am your mayor. There is the public school community, and I am your mayor. There is the university community – the students, the faculty, staff, and administration of John Carroll University, and I am your mayor. Finally, and NOT least of all, there is the black community, and I am your mayor.

In 2020, when George Floyd was murdered in Minneapolis, I took action. When students wanted to march in protest in our community to bring attention to both Floyd's murder and that black lives matter, I coordinated our the leaders of the protest, our safety services, our businesses, the schools, all stakeholders. Demonstrators marched from Wiley Middle School down Cedar Road down Warrensville Center Road to City Hall and the police station, and rallied outside the municipal complex. This was done safely, respectfully, and meaningfully without incident.

That evening, I went out there and addressed the crowd. I told them that I heard them, that I was with them, and that Justice did not allow us to wait to act. We convened the Citizens Committee to Reform Policing Policies, doing in our own Community the thing that we could do here. Working together we reformed our city's use of force and de-escalation policies, and did so with everyone at the table. We included our own Police department, we included leaders of that protest, and also on that committee: a cross section of residents. Eventually every participant of the committee won citizen of the year as a group. That is the University Heights I am proud to be mayor of.

Which brings me to last's week joint Finance Committee. The budget cut to our Juneteenth celebration and the comments made by council members to justify that cut, fell well short of anything to be proud of.

I go back to 2020, when I wrote a column for our Mosaic magazine, contemplating George Floyd's murder and the events of that summer, contemplating our twin public health crises in this country: the Covid-19 pandemic, and systemic racism. I recalled the words of writer Ibram X. Kendi, the author of 2019's "How to Be an Antiracist." That is not enough to NOT be racist, one must be anti-racist. And the obligation of being anti-racist is to recognize (and I quote Kendi) that "the only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it – and then dismantle it."

I believe in that. I aspire to that. Which is why I must respond tonight to what was said at finance committee last week. It is my duty as your mayor. It is my duty if I am to be anti-racist.

It is my duty to respond to certain council members, to my fellow elected officials, and ask "What did you mean when you said that the Juneteenth celebration isn't for everybody?" When you said that is only for a certain group of people?

Juneteenth is both a national holiday and a city holiday. We all celebrate the end of slavery in this country. Surely you did not really mean that only black people celebrate the end of slavery. We join together with our black brothers and black sisters to celebrate the end of slavery. That is a celebration that everybody may take part in, where all are welcome.

We've held a Memorial Day parade in this city for over 60 years. The parade honors those who have been lost in service to this country. We all participate in that parade and that parade is for everybody, even those of us who did not personally experience the loss of a family member or friend who died in service to this country.

I have never heard anybody say that the Memorial Day Parade isn't for everybody. That it's only for certain people. But. When members of our city council treat the Juneteenth event differently than our other events, saying that one event is just for certain people, while the other events are for everybody -- that's racism. That has to be called out.

Last year we had at our Juneteenth Celebration as a headliner, Krayzie Bone, a platinum selling, Grammy Award winning artist, among other high-profile performers, who were on tour and whose contracts required a certain amount of security, especially given the turnout we were expecting, and got. Maybe it would be easier for some folks to understand, were it Mick Jagger or Taylor Swift coming to town to perform. Maybe then some folks would understand better the prudence of the additional security that comes with having a celebrity entertainer perform.

And in fact, this information was all presented to city council last year at the time when we approved funding the additional security. To have one member of council last week suggest, in her effort to be "blunt" (as she put it), that the reason the City needed additional security for Juneteenth, more security than for Fall Fest, was because the City must think that the people who attend Juneteenth are more dangerous than people who attend the Fall Fest.

That's a racist statement. And it's a false thing to say. It ought not be in the public discourse. People who say that sort of thing shouldn't be in the front of this council meeting room, they shouldn't be in the front of a classroom, they shouldn't be anywhere working the levers of power or holding a position of responsibility where decisions are made that affect the public.

When another member of our city council stated that the budget should be cut on this event out of "fairness to the taxpayer," what taxpayer are they being fair to? We are all taxpayers. There is a more pernicious and historic context in which the word "taxpayer" is used in public discourse. It's the reason why I've gotten away from using the term "taxpayer" when discussing "public resources." And it is this.

The term taxpayer has been used historically by some white people to differentiate themselves, they who perceive that they pay all the taxes, and the black people whom those same white people perceive get the benefit from all their taxes. But of course, the fact is that black people who live and work and own property pay just as much in taxes as everybody else. In University Heights, black people make up one in four residents, and people of color make up one in three.

So the question must be asked again, fairness to the taxpayer means fairness to whom exactly? If that's the argument for cutting Juneteenth we deserve an answer as to how that is fair and to whom.

Juneteenth was our best attended event at The Walt in 2023. It was rated higher – higher – on our community event survey than the Memorial Day Parade. Why wouldn't we continue to fund the Juneteenth celebration? What is the end goal that comes with defunding it? Who is served by that?

One more:

When a council member said that there's more to diversity than just one group of people, without having the nerve to say explicitly what group of people she meant, but it was obvious so I'll say it: clearly, she was saying that there's more to diversity than just black people and celebrating black people's freedom from slavery, that we should celebrate a "diversity day" instead of Juneteenth. This wholly disregarded that there is a new federal holiday of Juneteenth that President Biden declared just 3 years ago, and that our City codified by ordinance -- why would we now make up a holiday called "diversity day" and celebrate that instead? What is the problem this council member has with celebrating Juneteenth in this city?

We should all celebrate the end of slavery. We should all celebrate freedom for black Americans. We should all celebrate how after the Civil War, this country was reformed and reborn, newly dedicated to the cause of freedom, with equal protection for black and white alike.

As President Bill Clinton once said, there's nothing wrong with America that cannot be cured by what is right with America. He was right then, and it is right today. There is this enduring paradox, two things that are simultaneously true and in diametric opposition: that America was founded to secure the blessings of liberties, and that America was built on the backs of unpaid black slave labor.

Slavery is our country's "original sin" and as a country we will always have to atone and account for that. There will never be a time that we don't or shouldn't, because that will always be the history. Celebrating Juneteenth is a prime opportunity for us to remember how far we've come, and how far we still have to go.

Just last month we passed a Black History Month resolution and, in that resolution, we stated that "black history is American history." It's one thing to write words on a sheet of paper. We have to put those words into action. That action means that we hold the Juneteenth celebration, that we continue to fund the Juneteenth celebration. That we don't cut it in order to be "fair to taxpayers," or make up some fake holiday to celebrate instead, and that we don't raise specters that the people attending Juneteenth are dangerous. There were no incidents at Juneteenth last year. The only incidents we've ever had at a Juneteenth event are people who needed a little medical attention because they got overheated sitting out in the sun too long.

Where do we go from here?

At minimum the city council should restore in full the funding to the Juneteenth celebration, the city's premiere, best attended, and most popular singular event.

Individual council members who have said racist things in committee meetings about the event should apologize to the community for what they said.

But more than that.

Those council members should go home, go upstairs to their bathrooms, look in the mirror, and repeat into their mirror, just one last time, the things they said. They should look at their own faces, watch their own mouths, as those words come out of their mouths one more time, hopefully for the last time.

They should think about how bad that looks, how bad it sounds, how bad it is. They should vow never to do it again.

Then they should ask themselves what they really stand for, what values they actually hold, why they are in public service, and until they can articulate good reasons, don't leave that bathroom. And if you can't do that, then look deep down inside and ask yourself, what are you doing here? What are you really doing here? And if you can't answer that with something good and positive, if you can't answer that with the love and respect needed that it takes to help to move this community forward, and move everyone who lives in this community forward, then maybe, maybe you are in the wrong line of work.

I don't take this lightly. I don't take racism lightly. Last week you were wrong. This week, you have an opportunity to make it right. I hope you do.

Thank you, this concludes my report.

### **Reports and Communications from City Council, and the taking of action thereon**

Based on the Mayor's report, Mrs. Weiss made the following comments. Mrs. Weiss thanked everyone for coming to the Council meeting to voice their thoughts and noted that none of their comments were taken lightly because that the public comment portion of the agenda is so resident can speak directly to Council if they have concerns and City Council is there for the residents.

Mrs. Weiss continued to state that she knew every single Council member and no one was a racist and that there were no undertones of racism during the Finance meeting. "The Mayor has done a bang-up job just now of splintering the community even further when it was just repairing itself over the last two years. So, we will continue this discussion, and I just want to make something else very clear. Juneteenth was never going to be cut. The amount was going to be lowered. It is still double than any of the other programs right now, and that can change in our discussion when we have it on the agenda item. It's important to the City,

and it's important to City Council. Do not let what the Mayor said blind you to any of that, because it is untrue, period.”

Ms. Weizer stated that she thought that Council had just been attacked by the Mayor and that the Mayor attacked her personally, and that he (the Mayor) knew he had attacked her personally, so she wanted the chance to respond to that. “I sat here and I took notes. Number one, the base budget for Juneteenth was \$20,000. That is more than is allocated for any other event in the City. That remains untouched. Council did not cut that budget. They did cut the budget for security. Something I think the Mayor has chosen not to explain, and I think people need to hear it.” “Here's the issue. Council asked for the budget and to meet with the department heads to discuss everything that was going to be in the budget. And we did that beginning in September. Council was told in September no, we have to wait until November, until after the election, because the Mayor was unsure who would be sitting in the Council seats. In November, after the election, we requested again to meet with the department heads and to go over everything that was planned on being in the budget, so that we could discuss fully what was planned and what was going to happen. We were just not told we couldn't discuss it and that he wouldn't have a budget. He also sent to the department heads, and he gave them an order not to talk to us about anything regarding the budget, or he would hold them in insubordination. It is an email. It is accessible, if you wish to access it, through a public information request. That's a violation of the Ohio Revised Code. It's a civil violation, so he is without penalty unless we were to hire a lawyer and take him into court. So, when we were finally given the budget in the middle of February, we were given numbers on a sheet of paper, that's all. No explanation as to what that budget consisted of. No explanation as to what was planned. When we met, we do know what our city departments generally need, so the discussion regarding those departments was pretty clear. But in coming to budgeting for the events, like the summer series, Fall Fest, Juneteenth, all we're looking at is numbers. We don't know what's planned. And there was no one here to answer it, because the Mayor said to us, and it's on the tape, well, Geoff could not come. We could have talked to him. We could have talked to him before. We could have talked to him then.

Ms. Weizer continued to say “Here's what my statement was about what I was handed on paper. If somebody who wasn't involved with the city picked up the budget and just looked at the paper, they would wonder why \$15,000 of security was sitting for Juneteenth and not for anything else. And to me, that says something it shouldn't say. That says something that is racist, if anything, if you just look at numbers. And that's what my statement was about. People look and they read things and they interpret it if they don't have the background. And that's where the problem comes in. We have to educate ourselves. Every one of you that came up here and spoke, and when you spoke about your history, I know your history because I have talked to my friends who are African American. I've talked to them and I've asked them, what is your life like? But here's what I've learned. I've learned that one of my friends named her two kids, Kyle and Lauren. And I said, why'd you name them Kyle and Lauren? And you know what she said? Because when they apply for a job, I want them to be considered for that job without race coming in as a factor. As a white person, white people don't have to deal with that. But African Americans do. That's a problem. That's an issue. That someone has to bury part of their heritage in order to be able to present something to get a job. That's how racism permeates. Racism permeated for years because of how we did housing in this country. Because the African American community was cut out of the banks. And it developed a cash economy. And because you had a cash economy, when we did something with FHA loans, you weren't deemed to be credit worthy because you didn't have credit like white folk did. That's the kind of institutional racism that is out there and continues to affect the black community. That's the kind of stuff that hurts. That's the kind of stuff that's a problem. The discussion about the events as a whole, were not about this is some bad event or nobody wants Juneteenth. Good Lord! Juneteenth, because of the number of people that turned out, is probably an event that is sitting there that allows you to educate. And we all need educating.

Ms. Weizer noted that she read the Mayor's posting where he talked about a Mother Jones article. Ms. Weizer said that she found that interesting because the Mother Jones article said that “if you use the word taxpayer, that it's a sort of a dog whistle. But the reality is even if you are poor you are paying taxes. If you buy at the store any paper product, you are paying a tax. If you're lucky enough to own a beater that can get you to a job, and you put gas in the tank, you are paying Ohio and Federal gas tax. So, everybody is a taxpayer. I prefer to use the word resident but that can be sort of inclusive of only people who actually reside within the city. If you say taxpayer, it's a little broader. But is anybody meaning it as a dog whistle? I doubt it. Because everybody I know in this city pays taxes. I think that this was a great thing that someone could use to decide to beat up on the council and certain members of the council. And there is no doubt that the Mayor and I are not good friends. But here's something strange. You know, people say to me what do you think of the Mayor? And when they say that, I tell them he's done a lot of good things. He has. And I support those things. However, I will call him when I think he needs calling. And I hope you do too.

He doesn't like it when people tell him, hey, maybe I think you're wrong. But he needs to hear it. We all do, and we need to listen respectfully. And that's the important part. Thank you.

Mr. King stated that Black History is American History and that University Heights celebration of Juneteenth has shown the community to be exceptional. It showcased the city as welcoming for all and as being so much more than a home. Mr. King added that he hoped that Council would fix this issue tonight.

**Reports and communications from the Directors of the Department of Finance, the Department of Law, the Department of Public Safety, the Department of Public Service, and other department heads as applicable, and the taking of action thereon**

**Finance Director Dennis Kennedy** stated you would provide his financial report at the next Council meeting.

**Law Director Luke McConville** stated that in connection with University Square, he invited the legal counsel for the developer to attend the next Council meeting in Executive Session. In connection with their attendance the discussion at that point will likely be documents that are in final form that will get the parties resolved in the bankruptcy matter and allow the transaction to move forward so that some action can occur on site.

**Fire Department – Chief Perko** reported that March 17th through the 23<sup>rd</sup> is Ohio severe weather awareness week and that people may hear emergency broadcasts from the Ohio tornado warning weather system on reverse 911 systems, on the radio, on Wednesdays.

**Service Department – Allen Pennington** reminded everyone that the City would be holding its annual Spring Household Hazardous Waste collection and Paper Shred Event. Residents are invited to bring their hazardous waste and paper to the Service Department yard behind city hall on Friday, March 8th from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. for drop-off service and on Saturday, March 9th from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. with drop-off and on-site paper shredding.

There were no other director reports.

**Reading and Disposition of Ordinances, Resolutions, Motions and Consideration of Agenda Items:**

**A. Ordinance 2024-03 Establishing Permanent Appropriations for the Year Ending December 31, 2024 and Declaring an Emergency (on second reading)**

Mrs. Weiss stated that this Ordinance was in regards to the City's Budget for 2024 and that there was a Joint Finance Advisory and Finance Committee meeting the previous week. Mrs. Weiss noted that the presented budget was given to member of Council at the beginning of February 2024, which left little if almost no time to review it. Typically, Council starts to review the budget in September/October with a series of meetings. Council was not afforded that opportunity this year. The budget was reviewed by the Finance Committee and the Lay Finance Advisory Committee. Mrs. Weiss said that there were some adjustments made to the budget and some highlights she wanted to discuss would include the city's Juneteenth celebration so that Mr. Engelbrecht could provide a better understanding of what is going to be planned for this year. Council passed an Ordinance for the purchase the YABI building (next door to the police station) in order to begin the new facilities, engineering, architecture, and hopefully bringing those to fruition for new buildings for the municipal campus. Mrs. Weiss noted that that was not in the original budget and that she spoke with Finance Director, Mr. Kennedy so that it could be added to the budget that is being presented at this Council meeting. Mrs. Weiss also stated that that the building would be purchase with capital cash and will not have anything to do with the operating budget. The city has investments, and those investments will kickstart the municipal campus, there will probably enough capital cash to build one of the buildings. The thought is for police and fire buildings to be built first and will tap into the city's investment reserves. Council also passed an ordinance to enter into loose recycling in the city, that will be at a large cost because additional employee and equipment will be required. A Service Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday to finalize what loose recycling will look like. The extra needed equipment will be around \$370,000 it could be less depending on the finalization of the types of equipment that will be needed.

One thing that the Finance Committee, and the Lay Committee added were flat cameras for the Police Department. This is a trend that is happening throughout the country and has actually reduced crime in the 90% range. The flat cameras are only license plate readers and can track cars going city to city. This was added based on the numerous Safety Committee meetings that Ms. Marshall is the Chairperson of.

Mr. Rach asked if all the requested adjustments by Council had been made to the budget.

Mrs. Weiss replied that she discussed all the requested adjustments with Mr. Kennedy and that they both compared their notes to make sure that all the adjustments were made and entered into the updated budget per the referral from the committee.

At this point, Mrs. Weiss addressed the budget for Juneteenth and asked Mr. Engelbrecht to explain what the plan was for this year. Because Council did not get the opportunity to speak with him at the Finance Committee meeting about what type of activities there would be, what funding did he think would be needed aside from the grant that was granted to the celebration, are there other funding opportunities available, who is the committee comprised of, what have been the discussion for the event.

Mr. Englebrecht replied that the committee is comprised of residents, city employees and other small business owners, etc. Currently the event will have two (2) stages like last year, with the larger stage serving as the main entertainment stage and the small stage having the smaller events. The cost of the stages will be approximately \$11,500 and the various tents from Able Rents are a little over \$3,000. In terms of entertainment the committee is looking at different performers; including a jazz band, southern jazz band, Cleveland Chorale (who have been apart of the event since the beginning). Kira Cotton from WKYC will emcee again this year. The committee is still in the process of looking at DJs, but again, there is eight hours to utilize the stages. The committee is looking for the backstage to have different things, not just yoga, Zumba and the hip-hop dance workout. The committee is looking at line dancing to occur also at the backstage, and potentially comedy. Again, making this a truly unique event within the Cleveland region. The budget includes the \$15,000 for security because the committee is also looking at potentially reaching out to some national acts such as R&B this year instead of hip-hop. But still somebody who could headline the event and bring something to at least the eastern suburbs and the east side of Cleveland that is worthy of a celebration.

Mrs. Weiss said that she had a couple of questions and again, one of the reasons Council had such an issue with this budget was because Council was not allowed to speak to the directors beforehand and Mr. Englebrecht was not at that Finance Committee meeting. The Committee was basically left in the dark and nobody had any of the answers to the questions that were asked. Mrs. Weiss asked Mr. Englebrecht if any contracts were currently signed besides the \$11,500 and the \$3,000 for the stages and tents? Mr. Englebrecht replied that the committee had agreements but no contracts have been signed as of yet.

Mrs. Weiss asked how much were those agreements totaling right now? Mr. Englebrecht replied roughly \$6,000 and that would include agreements from artists, two jazz bands, the emcee, the gospel choir - Cleveland Chorale, roughly \$6,000. Mrs. Weiss asked if there were any other leads on founders for this program. Mr. Englebrecht said that Dollar Bank has been gracious with a \$10,000 donation, but the committee is still reaching out to other local organizations.

Mrs. Weiss mentioned one other thing for the benefit of the audience. Last year's \$14,000 or \$15,000 for safety was not necessarily, as the Mayor said; because of the acts. The park does not have the correct entrances and exits as a larger venue that could hold 14,000 people. Because of that, the Police Chief and Mr. Englebrecht researched what needed to be done to keep our residents safe in case there's some kind of emergency where people have to either leave or come in a safe manner. It had nothing to do with the acts themselves. The park is not made or equipped to handle that amount of people on a regular basis. That is the reason. Mrs. Weiss wanted to make it very clear that was the reason why City Council approved the extra dollars two weeks before the event last year. Mrs. Weiss added that she did want to say before the discussion continued, if Council had the budget earlier and had this information beforehand, Council would have been able to make a more educated decision. As opposed to what happens like what Ms. Weizer said, when Council just sees numbers and has no idea what those numbers encompass. Mrs. Weiss thanked Mr. Englebrecht for coming up and explaining to Council what this event will look like this year. As it seems that it will actually be a little different than last year as well. Lastly, Mrs. Weiss said she thought that the more years that Mr. Englebrecht does this, the better he gets at it and the more input from the residents and the more input from the city itself.

Mayor Brennan asked Mr. Engelbrecht from the time that the Administration introduced the budget at the February 5th Council meeting to the Finance meeting three weeks later on February 27th, did anybody from Council reach out to him about that (budget)? Mr. Engelbrecht replied no.

Ms. Marshall commented that the question that the Mayor had just asked was strange to her because she was 1,000% sure that the Mayor instructed the Department Directors not to talk to Council about anything pertaining to the budget. So why would Council reach out knowing that they were not going to talk to them?

Mayor Brennan replied that that was before the budget was introduced.

Mr. Rach asked Mr. Kennedy if he remembered what the out-door total budget was for the 2022 Juneteenth Celebration, and the 2023 Juneteenth Celebration.

Mr. Kennedy replied the total budget for 2022 was \$10,000 and for 2023 it was \$20,000.

Mr. Rach said so the budget doubled from 2022 to 2023 for 4,000 people. Mr. Rach added that he thought the concern from Council was how did the budget double once again from \$20,000 to \$45,000. How did it go from \$10,000 to \$20,000 and now to \$45,000? When Council sees \$45,000 verse \$10,000 and none of the other events escalated as much that is when you get into these types of conversations. And there was the question about security, specifically because it was a \$15,000 line item for security. Mr. Rach said he understands that this is the city's largest event, with 4,000 people. Mr. Rach said he also knew that the Mayor mentioned he's expecting 10,000 people for the eclipse party where there is no security, that is where members of Council got confused.

Mr. Engelbrecht said that as part of the planning he met with the Police and Fire Departments regularly about what they felt the level of security should be. And part of that Mr. Engelbrecht found out that the Police Department had roughly six to eight police officers that they could assign to the event. In 2022 that number worked because it was the first Juneteenth event it was not as heavily populated. Mr. Engelbrecht said that he and the Police Chief went back and forth looking at different scenarios talking about what it would look like for the community if the event was over policed all of which led to talking with the consultant. In the end the sheriff's department provided most of the security for the event with approximately 10 sheriffs for \$11,000 along with the additional security around the main stage bring the security cost to \$15,000. There was also an increase in cost for additional portable toilets based on the County Board of Health recommendation that for events with 1,000 people or more that there be as least 20 toilets and only 6 toilets were budgeted based on what was ordered for 2022.

Mr. Rach asked what was the final spend for the 2023 Juneteenth Celebration.

Mr. Engelbrecht replied roughly \$43,000.

Mr. Rach commented that he wanted to be clear about where his frustration came in. When Council reviewed last year's budget which was a \$20,000 budget item. Mr. Rach said that he had assumed that the administration would plan for \$20,000 in expenses. Instead, from what he heard in those meetings was that the administration spent all that money and then realized oh, we still need these other things, which compelled Council to increase the budget two weeks before the event. Mr. Rach said that was not what he wanted to get into on any of that in the future. When there is a budget, it does not matter what it is for, capital, operating, salaries or whatever. When there is a budget, you work within that budget. It's important that the budget is stuck with and not spend it all the way and then say, I still want to do this and this; I need more (money). Council heard about the eclipse party, which the Mayor already bought 10,000 pairs of glasses before Council even had a budget. Those are things that have to be watched out for. Is it appropriate to be doing it that way, yes or no? Mr. Rach thanked Mr. Engelbrecht for answering the questions that Council had now at this Council meeting. Mr. Rach stated that he would be supportive if the Recreation budget was capped and looked at in a whole and then the Administration chooses to use that however they chose for the various programs.

Mr. Cooney said that he looked at the numbers from last year's event and the questions that were coming up now are in direct response for what Mr. Engelbrecht asked last year when the additional funds were requested. This is more detailed and provides clear information as to what the expenses for the event would be. The revenue as reported for 2023 was \$6,675 incoming. The expenses were \$43,496, approximate \$36,000 difference. This year, what was initially proposed in the draft budget was \$44,100 and the revenue currently is listed at \$18,000, but that would include the \$10,000 commitment from Dollar Bank for a difference of \$26,100, which is about \$10,000 less difference than 2023. Mr. Cooney said that

he didn't get any heartburn over that although he understood the concerns from other council members, the questions they have, he thought were all quite frankly valid. Mr. Cooney said that he appreciated Mr. Engelbrecht coming prepared this year with more detail and that he enjoyed the event the last two years. Mr. Cooney said that he also appreciated Mr. Rach's and other Council members questions. But he also appreciated the work that the committee has done because the difference between the revenue and expense has actually shrunk showing not only that it is a good event, a marquee event with the in-coming revenue increasing which decreases the burden that the city is providing. We are moving in the right direction and should continue to do as such.

Mr. King stated that Mr. Cooney covered the questions and comments he was going to make.

Mr. Rach added his thanks for Mr. Engelbrecht getting a sponsor lined up and encourage him to continue to find donations throughout the community.

Ms. Weizer asked Mr. Engelbrecht if he was the victim of his own success because the numbers of people in attendance have grown from 4,000 to 9,000 people and it sounds like Mr. Engelbrecht want the numbers to grow even larger with talks of this being a regional event. Are we outgrowing the park with this? If it were to become a regional event that would be something good for University Heights to be the lead on.

Mr. Engelbrecht replied that those conversations have begun with other cities, but nothing is even close to the point of figuring this out for a regional event between University Heights, Cleveland Heights and South Euclid. Regarding the Walter Stinson Park there has been ample room, enough spacing and enough security.

Ms. Weizer commented that she thought it was a good event and on a personal level she wished it had a little bit more educational things going on. It is a great celebration, but sometimes people need to be educated as well.

Mrs. Weiss asked Mr. Engelbrecht if the level of security would be the same as last year and with the additional \$21,000 of expenses would there be any other expenses and would the event hit the \$44,000 that was originally budgeted?

Mr. Engelbrecht replied that the level/number of security needs would be the same as last year and that the expenses would hit the \$44,000 because of the cost of the performers.

Mrs. Weiss agreed with that \$10,000 has already been secured and that will lower the overall net. Mrs. Weiss added that she felt that every event should be separate so that it is clear what each event net out at. The one item that needed to be mindful about is that Council has always asked for all departments to included the overtime services of police, fire and service in their programing budgets and going forward Mrs. Weiss hopes that the departments will be mindful of that request.

Mrs. Weiss said that personally she was okay with restoring the \$44,000 in the Juneteenth budget now that Council has a clear explanation of what the \$44,000 entails and she would like to hear how the rest of Council feels.

Mr. Cooney said he would be in favor of restoring the \$44,000 and thanked Mr. Engelbrecht for providing the explanations and details of the cost.

Ms. Marshall said that she had had several questions as well and that she was glad to received the clarification regarding the security for the event. And, if she was not mistaken, she recalled it was the Police Chief saying the reason for the security was because it was a Grammy nominated artist. Ms. Marshall said that she knew that artist have their own security as well so she was surprised to hear the city had to pay extra money for them to have security. Ms. Marshall asked Mr. Engelbrecht if security went to the after gathering that was held behind the Building Department house? As it relates to security for this year is the \$15,000 still anticipated or could it possible to more because of the possible increase in the number of attending people.

Mr. Engelbrecht replied he did not think so because the after gathering was just for friends and family of Crazy Bones along with a couple of volunteers and committee people who stayed around and held for the entire event day. There has not been a safety meeting for the event but Mr. Engelbrecht did not believe the cost for security would be more than the \$15,000.

Mrs. Weiss thanked Mr. Engelbrecht. In continuation for the discussion of the 2024 budget Mrs. Weiss asked Mayor Brennan what the additional \$25,000 for branding was for the additional signs and if so where would they be placed.

Mayor Brennan replied that he is in discussion with Guide Studio about designing signs for Purvis Park and the Municipal campus; bot of which should be electronic signs. A contract has been proposed for just the design fees for approx. \$9,000 to \$10,000 and the signs would be at a large cost than that so that is just a placeholder at this point.

Mrs. Weiss said that she would hope that the municipal and Purvis Park signs would be designed, created and installed by the end of 2024. Having electronic signs would be good to communicate to the public pool closing and other information. Mrs. Weiss noted that although the sign would not have to go before the Board of Zoning for approval she would suggest that they should be part of the discussion for the development of the signs.

Mayor Brennan replied absolutely and noted that the benefit of having an electronic sign at Purvis Park would be to indicate when the pool is open, when the pool is closed and other information about the pool, pool activities, tennis courts, etc. Having a similar sign at City Hall would really enhance communication to the community.

Mrs. Sax asked Mr. Kennedy via Zoom if the amount of the combined miscellaneous expenses, what the total was before, specifically assigning them to the budget as a dedicated expense.

Mr. Kennedy replied that he did not remember offhand that figure, but that he would provide them to her.

Mrs. Weiss added that she did not remember either but that it was a significant amount in the six figures.

Mrs. Sax said she thought it was around \$100,000.

Mr. Rach noted that in addition to the \$25,000 for city branding there was a line item of \$10,000 for city branding promotional items that he was not sure what the items were.

Mr. Kennedy replied that was originally \$15,000 and the committee cut it down to \$10,000.

Mayor Brennan commented that the \$10,000 pertains to the “swag” city promotional items and that was discussed at the committee meeting.

**MOTION BY MRS. WEISS, SECONDED BY MR. KING to Amend the City 2024 Budget to change the Juneteenth Celebration line item to \$44,000 for Expenses.**

Mr. Cooney asked if within the budget was Council allocating additional funds to hire an additional worker in the Service Department for the collection of recyclables.

Mrs. Weiss replied correct.

Mr. Cooney said his concern was during the Finance Committee meeting he asked the Service Director and they need approximately ten (10) service workers each day for the back/side collection of trash. With the Ordinance that was passed to improve recycling services, which Mr. Cooney agrees with, we now need to hire an additional person to help facilitate this. If the city were to move to curbside collection the department would need approximately eight (8) service workers per day as opposed to 11. So now we will be having to add more labor to this department as opposed to what 48 other communities do in the county is curbside collection.

Referring to Mr. Cooney’s statements, Mrs. Weiss stated that there were two surveys where the majority of the residents wanted to keep backyard pickup but she was not going any further with that discussion although there could come a time when the city cannot afford backyard pickup anymore. Right now, that is actually not the case and there is a Service Committee meeting on Wednesday to tweak the Ordinance so additional discussion could be had at that time.

Mrs. Weiss stated that there was a motion and second on the floor to amend the budget with the one line item to increase the Juneteenth Celebration back to \$44,000.

**On roll call, all voted “aye.”**

**MOTION BY MRS. WEISS, SECONDED BY MR. RACH to Adopt Ordinance 2024-03 as Amended, Establishing Permanent Appropriations for the Year Ending December 31, 2024 and Declaring an Emergency.**

Before the vote Mrs. Weiss thanked the residents for their comments, noting that Council does listen and take their comments and suggestions seriously. Mrs. Weiss encouraged everybody to e-mail, call or text because all of Council is there for them.

Ms. Marshall pointed out that she was very disturbed about this being turned into an issue of racism. Ms. Marshall stated that she works with the City Council members everyday and that she does not see racism. Although she did not agree with every statement that had been made. She did not agree nor hear anyone say that the City should separate, get rid of Juneteenth at all. Ms. Marshall stated that she definitely did not agree that Council should do a diversity day in place of Juneteenth. But wanted to make it clear that she was disturbed about the fact that this got turned into a racist thing, because that was not what this was. This was about the budget and concerns about the budget. Ms. Marshall stated that she was proud to be an African-American woman and that she has the exact same experiences as everybody who spoke. Ms. Marshall said that she is very passionate about it and an advocate, but she did not want to sit there and not address the fact that she knew that this was not a racist City Council.

Mayor Brennan also thanked everyone and commented that sometimes it is said that one person can't change the world, sometimes it is shown that that is what it takes for people to get up, stand up, say what is right. Mayor Brennan thanked Council for heeding and listening and responding, you know, appropriately, generally at least you know especially the part where the budget was amended and the funding restored. Mayor Brennan said he was looking forward to having, you know, the best Juneteenth yet. Thank you to the residents who came out and spoke up to make it happen. You get the credit for coming out her and speaking truth to power.

**On roll call, all voted “aye.”**

Mr. Kennedy stated that he would provided Mrs. Thomas with the amended 2024 Budget Appropriation for filing with the County Auditor's Office.

**B. Motion to Advertise and Seek Bids for the 2024 General Yard Nuisance Abatement Project**

Mr. Engelbrecht stated that this was in conjunction with the annual program contract to solicit bids for the grass cutting, brush cleanup, etc. for nuisance properties in the city. The will allow time to receive bids for the project before the grass cutting season begins. Last year the cost was \$30 per cut.

Ms. Weizer asked what was the turn-around time allotment for resident if their house gets cited for high grass before the contractor is sent out.

Mr. Engelbrecht replied it should be three (3) days. The inspectors cover the entire city on Monday and then return on that Thursday, if the grass has not been cut they address is given to the contractor for cutting. Any complaints or questions can go to Mr. Engelbrecht.

Mrs. Weiss asked Mr. Engelbrecht to make sure that the City inspectors give the residents a little more than the three days to cut their grass if there are heavy rains.

**MOTION BY MR. COONEY, SECONDED BY MS. MARSHALL to Advertise and Seek Bids for the 2024 General Yard Nuisance Abatement Project. On roll call, all voted “aye.”**

**C. Motion to Authorize the Mayor to Enter into a Contract with LNE Group in an amount not to exceed \$30,000 for Federal and State Advocacy Support for the City of University Heights**

Mayor Brennan reported that this was referenced at the Finance Committee meeting on February 27, 2024 and that he was recommending that the City retain LNE Group for lobbying services to seek Federal and State funding for sewer projects in the city. The proposed contract for University Heights to consider would engage LNE to pursue funding for the sewer manhole replacement project from two sources; The State of Ohio's one-time Strategic Community Investment Fund, and also the Federal Fiscal Year 2025 Congressionally Directed Spending CDS. Applications for the one-time Federal Fund to the Ohio Senator Brown are due by April 1. Congressionally Directed Spending CDS appropriations request for fiscal year 2025 are accepted through 1159 p.m. Friday, March 22, 2024.

**MOTION BY MS. MARSHALL, SECONDED BY MR. KING to Authorize the Mayor to Enter into a Contract with LNE Group in an amount not to exceed \$30,000 for Federal and State Advocacy Support for the City of University Heights. On roll call, all voted “aye.”**

**D. Motion to Approve and Accept the NOACA CFI Grant Award in the amount of \$87,000 with a 20% match of \$17,400**

Mrs. Bremer-Fisher reported that this is an application from NOACA and that NOACA has applied and has received monies from the Federal Highway Administration Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Grant. NOACA has been awarded \$15 million to install electric vehicle chargers at more than 70 locations across northeast Ohio. This would be a partnership with NOACA to have four (4) level 2 ports installed in University Heights. The location the Administration is proposing is at the Walter Simpson Park east parking lot on Saybrook next to the Fire Administration and Detectives Bureau houses. The cost estimated cost is \$87,000 with the city's match being 20% match.

Mrs. Weiss noted that the City currently has one (1) charger port grant that is being managed by Mr. Engelbrecht.

Mr. Engelbrecht said that it is scheduled to be completed shortly.

**MOTION BY MR. KING, SECONDED BY MS. WEIZER to Approve and Accept the NOACA CFI Grant Award in the amount of \$87,000 with a 20% match of \$17,400. On roll call, all voted “aye.”**

**E. Ordinance 2024-08 Correcting a Scrivener's Error in Ordinance 2024-02 Relating to Codified Ordinance Chapter 1424, Nunc Pro Tunc, and Declaring an Emergency (on emergency)**

Mrs. Weiss stated that this would update the permit fees where an error was discovered in one of the percentages.

Ms. Weizer commented that the error was in the commercial fees, originally the fees were stated as .05 instead of .02. For example, a permit for a commercial establishment such as John Carroll would have originally incorrectly been \$750,000 as opposed to the correct fee amount of \$349,000. Ms. Weizer added that the way the Ordinance is written, it allows the City to actually backdate the correction to when the original increase in fees occurred. Meaning any permit that came in and that was mischarged can be corrected.

**MOTION BY MS. WEIZER, SECONDED BY MR. COONEY for the Suspension of the rules in Approve Ordinance 2024-08 Correcting a Scrivener's Error in Ordinance 2024-02 Relating to Codified Ordinance Chapter 1424, Nunc Pro Tunc, and Declaring an Emergency. Roll call on the Suspension of the Rules, all voted “aye.” Roll call on passage, all voted “aye.”**

**MOTION BY MS. WEIZER, SECONDED BY MR. KING for the Adoption of Ordinance 2024-08 Correcting a Scrivener's Error in Ordinance 2024-02 Relating to Codified Ordinance Chapter 1424, Nunc Pro Tunc, and Declaring an Emergency. Roll call on passage, all voted “aye.”**

**F. Motion to Enter Executive Session for the purpose of Discussing Legal Proceedings, Personnel and Real Estate Matters**

There was no need to hold executive session.

**Reports of standing committees and the taking of action thereon.**

**Standing Council Committees:**

**Building/Housing - Chairperson Winifred Weizer**

Ms. Weizer reported that the committee met just prior to the Council meeting and covered a couple of items. The committee is working with the departments of Building, Housing and Community Development to develop flow charts that will be clear in order to help residents know what they have to do for point of sales, rental permits, building permits, etc. Discussion and review will continue in regards to the SafeBuilt contract. Also, for discussion is possible programs for sidewalk repair.

**Community Outreach – Chairperson Mr. King**

Mr. King stated that a doodle poll would be coming out for the next meeting.

**Economic Development – Chairperson Mr. Rach**

Mr. Rach had no report for Economic Development. But as the Council liaison to Planning Commission, Mr. Rach informed everyone that on Thursday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 7pm there would be a Planning Commission meeting and two items were on the agenda. One item is to demolish a house on Claver Road and in order to construct a new home on the same lot. The second item is to demolish the old Boston Market and replace it with a parking lot that is in a U-9 District. There has been a lot of discussion on U-9 Districts so Mr. Rach thought it would be important member of Council to attend and hear the presentation so they can make a sound judgment when the project comes to council.

**Finance Committee – Chairperson Mrs. Weiss**

Mrs. Weiss stated that the committee just had its budget meeting and will be having its regularly quarterly meeting after March 31.

**Recreation Committee – Chairperson Mr. Cooney**

A doodle poll will be forth coming to schedule the next meeting to discuss Purvis Park and provide an update for city-owned signal wrapping.

**Safety Committee - Chairperson Ms. Marshall**

Ms. Marshall said the next meeting will be April 1 for a discussion updating street parking signs for Washington and East Carroll Blvd and discussion for the safety planning regarding Juneteenth.

**Service and Utilities – Chairperson Mrs. Sax**

The Committee will meet on March 6<sup>th</sup> at 6pm to finalize the recycling ordinance.

**Committee of the Whole – Vice Mayor Weiss**

Another doodle poll has been sent out in effort to schedule the Council Retreat meeting hopefully in April.

**Reports of special committees, and the taking of action thereon.**

No reports

**Unfinished and miscellaneous business.**

None

**MOTION BY MR. RACH, SECOND BY MR. COONEY, to adjourn the meeting. On roll call, all voted “aye”.**

There being no further business to consider, the meeting adjourned at 9:21pm.

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Michele Weiss, Vice Mayor

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Kelly M. Thomas, Clerk of Council