

**CIC City Beautiful Corporation Meeting Minutes**  
**City of University Heights**  
**Wiley Education Building**  
**September 18, 2024**

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**I. Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Brennan at 7:00 p.m.

**Present:** Mr. Shawn Belt, Chair  
Michael Dylan Brennan  
Vice Mayor Michele Weiss  
Mrs. Sheri Sax  
Mr. John Rach

**Board Members absent:** Susan Drucker

Others present: Deanna Bremer Fisher, CIC Secretary; Dennis Kennedy, CIC Treasurer; Brad Bryan, City of University Heights Law Director; and Gillian Hall and Hanna Cohen from Knez Homes

**Motion by Mr. Rach, seconded by Mayor Brennan to excuse Mrs. Drucker. Before a vote could be taken, Mrs. Drucker arrived at 7:03 p.m.**

**II. Approval of Meeting Minutes**

Regular Meeting, April 18, 2024 –

**Motion by Mr. Rach, seconded by Mrs. Sax to approve the minutes. Mrs. Sax seconded. All in favor said “aye.”**

Special Meeting, May 13, 2024 –

**Motion by Mrs. Sax, seconded by Mrs. Weiss to approve the minutes. Mayor Brennan abstained. All others said “aye.”**

Special Meeting, June 17, 2024 –

**Motion by Mrs. Weiss, seconded by Mr. Rach made a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Belt and Mr. Brennan abstained. All others said “aye.”**

**III. Presentation on Status of South Taylor Place Townhomes, Knez Homes**

Gillian Hall and Hanna Cohen stated that four units were completed, they held a grand opening on a model a few weeks ago, and they would like to do a ribbon cutting in the next couple of weeks. They added that they had a showing later that evening and another showing on Friday. They had started the next building, the foundation was in, and they were in the backfill phase. They expected to begin

framing in mid-to late-October. There was a 3–4-week lead time. They said they would probably not start the next group until they had at least four sales. They had drawings completed, however, because of a change in the building code, and would have to re-submit for permits. They stated that they would do so when they sold four units.

Mr. Rach asked when construction would be complete on units 1-4. Ms. Hall and Ms. Cohen stated that the units were 98% completed right now, and that this had occurred in the last month or two. Mr. Rach said that he was concerned that, although the City approved the design three years ago, in 2021, only one unit had sold in that amount of time. He expressed the concern that they might not be priced right to sell. He said he was concerned because there was tax abatement on the land. Ms. Hall and Ms. Cohen said that Knez broke ground last summer and that it usually took about a year to build. Mr. Rach said that he recalled that the units had been listed for over a year.

Mr. Rach mentioned Knez's Woodhill Town Homes in Little Italy and asked how long the process typically took. Ms. Cohen said that it depended. It took at least 12 months to complete, and townhouses in downtown Chagrin Falls took 18 months. She added that Knez typically listed the units to presell them. The townhouse product was very difficult for people. For single-family homes, Knez had specific product types, but townhouses were all a little different. People did not want to commit until the homes were at least in the drywall stage. Mr. Rach asked, "What is the turnaround time after drywall?" Ms. Cohen responded that now that they had sold and closed on a unit, activity had picked up. She said she would expect to sell the next three units in six months' time as people could now walk through the units.

Mr. Rach commented that when the project came before the CIC for approval three years ago, Knez had said they were \$300,000 units. Ms. Cohen responded that Knez could never guarantee what a price was going to be. Mr. Rach said that he was surprised to see the units listed at \$500,000 and was not surprised to see that they were not selling. He also said that he thought the contract specified the project would be completed by April of 2024. Ms. Cohen and Ms. Hall responded, detailing reasons for the delay including a long time to get to permits, juggling construction schedules, the Covid pandemic, the fluctuating supply chain, and rapidly changing prices.

Mr. Rach asked what Knez's current anticipated completion schedule was and if there would be a point at which Knez would consider lowering prices if the units did not sell. Ms. Cohen responded that given that they only had the first units completed for a month, they were not at a point where they would consider lowering the price. Mr. Brennan stated that the ceremonial groundbreaking was held in October 2022 and the actual groundbreaking was in spring of the next year. Ms. Cohen said that, since that time, Knez had installed a storm water detention system, utilities, and a portion of the road. She explained that they needed to schedule around those activities as they did not want to have them in the way of constructing the next building.

Mr. Belt thanked Ms. Cohen and Ms. Hall for "illuminating where Knez is" and asked if they were behind schedule. Ms. Cohen stated that Knez felt they were not

behind schedule and that they would be able to sell the units for \$500,000. She explained that the first buyer signed 2-3 months before they moved in. At that point, Knez had installed countertops, the backsplash, and flooring. They made some modifications for the buyer, who moved into the unit at the beginning of summer. Ms. Hall added that she believed the units “are absolutely going to sell,” saying that the project was close to the Cleveland Clinic and that some people preferred to live outside of Cleveland but within a 10-minute drive to work.

Mrs. Weiss thanked them, again, saying “we all want this to be successful” and asked if the parties could work collaboratively to create a schedule as the lots had been empty for many years. Ms. Cohen responded that an exact schedule would be difficult due to trade availability issues and winter weather. She suggested that Knez commit to giving more frequent updates.

Mrs. Weiss stated that there had been an original schedule and that there was a “complexity of reasons they were in this situation now.” She asked Knez if they could commit to completing a specific number of units by April 26, 2025. Ms. Cohen suggested that they could commit to completing the project within five years, but Mr. Rach and Mrs. Weiss suggested that they would like to see it completed in 18 months.

Mr. Bryan rephrased the issue, saying that although he was new to the CIC, it seemed like Knez would need to ask for an extension of the original agreement. The city likely had remedies, such as buying back the lots, but that everyone wanted the project to be completed and wanted to have confidence that it will be completed.

Mr. Rach again asked if Knez could commit to a schedule. Ms. Cohen stated that Knez could not commit to putting up 30 units in 18 months.

Ms. Drucker stated that the original agreement was finalized before Covid and that it was her understanding that 15 units had to be completed in 2024 or the school district could claw them back, which they were not interested in doing. A revised agreement would have to be between the school board and Knez.

Mr. Brennan agreed that the right to claw back the lots was with the school board and stated that the original agreement was signed in 2020. At that time, the parties were talking about prices of \$350,00 to \$400,00. He stated that the City of University Heights had just had a 42% property value reappraisal, which was in line with Knez’s current pricing, and that Knez had had an open house. He stated that, “I wish more units were built by now. It sounds like you are on your way. It seems as if we are back on track.”

Ms. Hall responded, “the first set does take longer because it is a new project.”

Mr. Brennan stated that the agreements did call for regular reporting and that he would like to hear from Knez quarterly. He said he would like a report made to University Heights City Council and would be fine with either an in-person report or a written report.

Ms. Hall stated that Knez worked with many community development corporations: “We do get our job done.” She added that, “The start of the project is always the hardest and once we get rolling things tend to move a little bit quicker.”

Mr. Belt asked why Knez started the project with the back units, rather than the ones in the front that would be the “most premier” units.

Ms. Hall responded that the order was based on the utilities.

Mr. Belt responded that he understood that they would “just build as you go.”

Mr. Rach stated that there were existing utilities on S. Taylor Road.

Ms. Hall replied that the project’s utilities came from the other side. There was no curb cut onto S. Taylor Road.

Mr. Rach stated that he thought a realistic schedule was needed and that quarterly updates were essential. “I hope we have four units sold at the next update or we will have to have another conversation.”

Mrs. Drucker suggested that it would be better for Knez to present in person on a specific date in December.

Mrs. Sax offered Dec. 2 or Dec. 16.

Mrs. Hall said that Dec. 16 would work for Knez.

Mr. Rach stated that he was willing to “put another schedule aside” and that he knew that “they have other projects, but this takes priority, too.”

Mrs. Weiss reiterated that, “we all want this to succeed for both of our benefits.”

Mrs. Hall confirmed that Dec. 16 worked for Knez to present to council.

**Motion by Mrs. Drucker, seconded by Mrs. Sax to require that Knez make a formal presentation in front of City Council on Dec. 16 to include a schedule and any other points of discussion. Mr. Brennan added that Knez should present a schedule, if feasible, and that he looked forward to hearing Knez’s position at that time. All in favor said “aye.”**

The CIC members thanked Ms. Cohen and Ms. Hall for coming, and they left the meeting.

#### **IV Election of Board**

Mr. Brennan gave the floor to Mrs. Weiss who stated that, based on the updated ordinance, the CIC members would vote on the officers and opened the issue for discussion as the CIC “needs to elect those officers.”

Mr. Bryan confirmed that the CIC must first amend its bylaws to reflect that the ordinance passed.

**Motion by Mrs. Weiss, seconded by Mr. Belt to amend the agenda to include amending the bylaws. All in favor said “aye.”**

#### **IV. Amending of Bylaws**

Mrs. Weiss made a motion to amend the bylaws.

Mr. Bryan confirmed that this was an amendment to the first paragraph of article 3, replacing it with 280.02(c). President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer.

**Motion by Mrs. Sax, seconded by Mr. Rach to amend the bylaws as stated.**

Discussion: Mr. Brennan confirmed that he vetoed the amendment, stating “I don’t believe this is the direction for the CIC to take, if we are going to continue to have the CIC.” **All in favor said “aye,” except for Mr. Brennan and Mrs. Drucker, who voted “nay.”**

The group returned to agenda item IV, Election of the Board.

#### **IV Election of Board**

**Motion by Mrs. Sax, seconded by Mrs. Weiss to nominate Shawn Belt for president**, stating that he was a “a-political resident who has a voice as close to the people as possible. He has made observations which serve the CIC well. He keeps informed well by attending as many meetings as possible. He can take the CIC in a direction to provide value-added.” Mr. Belt accepted the nomination. **All members said “aye” except Mr. Brennan, who voted “nay.”**

Mr. Belt was elected president of the CIC.

Mr. Belt, who was now chairing the meeting, stated that the group should move on to the position of vice president.

**Motion by Mrs. Weiss, seconded by Mrs. Sax to nominate Mr. Rach as vice president**, stating he was “familiar with how a CIC operates and would do an awesome job.” Mr. Rach accepted the nomination. **All in favor said “aye,” except for Mr. Brennan, who said “nay.”**

Mr. Rach was elected vice president.

Moving on the position of secretary, Mr. Bryan clarified that, according to the ordinance, the position of secretary/treasurer is one position. Mrs. Weiss asked if the CIC could amend the bylaws to have it be two positions. Mr. Bryan stated that the CIC could not amend the ordinance.

Mrs. Weiss stated that Mr. Kennedy must continue to serve as treasurer. Mayor Brennan said that Mr. Kennedy had said that he did not want the position. Mrs. Sax asked Mayor Brennan if he had that statement in writing. Mayor Brennan replied that he would not nominate Mr. Kennedy if he were not there to accept or reject the nomination.

Mr. Bryan said that “you either have to make the appointment or table it.”

Mrs. Weiss stated that there were filings that need to be completed and it was the end of the year for the CIC.

Mr. Rach asked for confirmation that Mr. Kennedy was still acting as treasurer.

Mrs. Drucker stated that “it would appear that he would be the treasurer until a resignation.”

**Motion by Mayor Brennan, seconded by Mrs. Drucker that the group table the rest of the positions.**

Discussion: Mrs. Weiss asked Mr. Bryan if Mr. Kennedy would still be considered the treasurer and Mr. Bryan replied that it would be the case until he resigned. Mrs. Weiss replied, “I’m OK with that.” Mrs. Drucker commented that article 1.5 stated that an officer can resign by giving notice to the secretary in writing and that we still need to decouple the positions. Mr. Rach asked Mrs. Fisher if she would be interested in continuing to serve as secretary. Mrs. Fisher stated that she would not.

**All in favor said “aye.”**

The appointment of secretary/treasurer was tabled.

Mr. Belt commented that the coupling of the two positions was a mistake. Mr. Bryan accepted responsibility for the mistake, saying that the former code section had the number of positions listed as three and that secretary/treasurer was appointed by the board, which he interpreted as being the same position. Mrs. Weiss stated that historical precedence was that the group had had two individuals fill those positions. Mr. Bryan said that while the “wording hasn’t changed, I don’t think you need to separate it.” Mayor Brennan stated that he “wouldn’t blame Mr. Bryan here.” Mr. Bryan said that if it was two positions then you needed people to want the job.

Mr. Belt said there were two officers who did not wish to continue. Mayor Brennan said there was a point of order. The CIC had tabled the election. Mr. Bryan said that the group could discuss the topic, and Mr. Belt said that he wanted to discuss the issue fully. He asked if the CIC needed to receive written resignations. Mr. Bryan confirmed that was the case and that they should be sent to the entire board.

Mrs. Weiss asked Mr. Bryan to confirm that UH City Council would need to present a new ordinance. Mr. Bryan confirmed and said that it shouldn’t hold anyone up. Mrs. Weiss stated that it made sense, for efficiency, that the City’s Finance Director be the CIC’s treasurer by default. Mr. Belt stated that the treasurer and finance director would need to work together and that “having Mr. Kennedy as treasurer has been efficient” and that “continuing that would be ideal.” Mayor Brennan said that he would not want to require a city employee to hold a particular office, especially if the employee did not want to hold that office. Mrs. Sax said that the position of treasurer had a very specific knowledge base, as opposed to the other offices. Mayor Brennan stated that a treasurer could work with the finance director. Mr. Belt said that

communication would need to be “as forthright and open as possible. We need to make sure we protect the board as much as possible.” Mrs. Drucker stated that Mr. Kennedy could put the report together, but that would not require him to come to the meeting. She suggested that the group ask him directly, rather than surprise him on the floor of a council meeting. Mrs. Sax asked if the treasurer was a voting member of the CIC, and Mr. Belt answered, “no.”

Mr. Brennan stated that Mr. Kennedy served in a part-time capacity and that he took an adjustment in pay to go parttime. He had asked for help to streamline and limit the obligations of his time. They already added him as the UH Parking Garage CIC treasurer. If they were going to add things to his plate, they needed to remember he was not a fulltime employee.

Mrs. Drucker suggested that perhaps he would consider serving if he was compensated for his time. Mrs. Sax commented that it was an issue of money and time and that it might take more of his time if he were to work with another person. Mr. Rach stated that he did not want to compel the finance director to serve by ordinance, and that there could be a level of compensation for the positions of secretary and treasurer. Compensation commensurate of the work involved, assured that they answer to this body and not administration. Mrs. Sax asked if the CIC could add another resident member for purposes of secretary or treasurer. Mrs. Weiss agreed that the idea of compensation for those roles was “intriguing,” but that she did not want to increase the number of members beyond seven as it was “important for voting.” Mrs. Drucker reminded everyone that she was compelled by ordinance to be there and that she was one of three original members. The other city director was appointed by Mayor, originally Patrick Grogen Meyers. Mr. Bryan stated that the ordinance specified the community development director. Mr. Belt clarified that it stated a director “whose duties are economic development, housing, or community development.” Mayor Brennan stated that he believed the discussion to be premature. Mrs. Drucker agreed, saying that “this all needs to be rewritten to make sure all is coordinated here—so everything aligns.” Mrs. Weiss stated that she agreed, adding, “Mr. Bryan is not our law director. We need to hire another law director.”

Mrs. Drucker clarified: CIC law director.

Mrs. Sax said, “Mr. Bryan is here as an interim so the community-housing person should come on board as an interim.”

Mayor Brennan replied that it was a unique situation. His view was that legal counsel for the CIC always should be the city’s law director. If Mr. Bryan was willing, they should ask him. They had an opportunity to have a city law director also be the CIC legal counsel.

Mr. Belt stated that it was clear that “we need to clean up the code of regulations” and asked, “as these are all new business, how much conversation can happen via e-mail about thoughts about compensation.” Mr. Bryan replied that there should not be any back-and-forth discussions via e-mail. The president could send out information to

the board or propose changes to the bylaws, but no one should be responding to it. The only exception would be in the case of scheduling a meeting because that was not talking about something substantive.

Mr. Belt asked Mr. Bryan to meet with him to discuss Ohio Sunshine Laws. Mayor Brennan suggested that he review the Yellow Book. Mr. Bryan stated that there were free seminars online and he could get a certificate.

Mrs. Sax asked, "If we can't speak to each other about these issues, can we speak to the law director?"

Mr. Bryan replied that CIC members could have a 1-on-1 conversation, but not a round robin discussion. Three members could meet, but they could not have the same conversation at a different time with another member.

Mr. Belt stated that the group would need an additional meeting before December. Mayor Brennan reminded him that, as president, he could call one.

#### **V. Authorization to pay full attorney's fees**

Mr. Belt gave Mrs. Weiss the floor as she had asked for this item to be on the agenda: a motion, for the record, directing the Mayor to pay Mr. Gibbons in full. Mrs. Drucker asked her to change her motion to direct Mr. Belt and/or Mr. Kennedy to sign the check as the Mayor is no longer president.

Mr. Bryan stated that Mr. Kennedy would have to go through a procedure where he was added as a signer.

**Motion by Mrs. Weiss, seconded by Mrs. Drucker to have the current treasurer cut the check to Mr. Gibbons in full and, in the most expeditious way, to reflect Mr. Belt and Mr. Rach as new signatories for the CIC and then have them sign the check.** Mrs. Drucker seconded the motion for purposes of discussion. Mayor Brennan commented that "Mr. Kennedy may not be able to get this done this week. I'm going to support that because the CIC appointed him, and he should get paid. I will not vote for any law director for the CIC to be paid more than the law director for the city." **All in favor said "aye."**

Mayor Brennan motioned to adjourn. Mrs. Weiss asked him to withdraw the motion.

Mrs. Weiss stated that she did not think the Mayor would want the current law director as the attorney and stated that she would want to ask Mr. Bryan if he would be comfortable being the CIC attorney. Mr. Bryan replied that he would like to be able to bill \$175/hr. Mr. Rach stated that it might be an issue if there was a conflict, and "we would have to get an attorney." Mrs. Weiss asked Mr. Bryan to present a contract at the next meeting.

**Motion to adjourn by Mr. Rach, seconded by Mrs. Sax. All said "aye."**

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Roberta Rubin  
Assistant Clerk of Council/Secretary