

SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 20, 2007

The Safety Committee meeting was held on February 20, 2007 at North Royalton City Hall, 13834 Ridge Road. The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Chairwoman Lisa Uffman-Kirsch.

Present: Chairwoman Lisa Uffman-Kirsch, committee members Denise Bobulsky and Robert Stefanik, Councilman Larry Antoskiewicz, Police Chief Paul Bican, Fire Chief Michael Fabish, residents William and Phyllis Fohs and Arleen Miciunas.

Mrs. Bobulsky requested that the DARE Program be added to the agenda for discussion.

The January minutes had not been completed, so there was no vote on approval.

1. Police Department Report

Chief Bican: The Mayor did not include any replacement of their five retirees in the budget this year. He presumed, maybe wrongly, that everybody was under the same assumption when the income tax passed, they were to get back the personnel they had lost, and for some reason they are not in his budget. He knew additional people were not going to be a guarantee, but thought they were going to get the five people they lost. Looking at all the developments built in the last five years, they should have been adding five officers in the last five years, not going backwards by five; so at this point they are at a deficit of ten at a minimum.

He was also worried about the additional cars they asked for; so thought it appropriate to touch base on that. He just gave a report to the mayor about their car situation. He only put four cars in the budget. They have eleven of them now out of warranty; so we are looking at potential vehicle maintenance problems and losses to go with it.

They also have a new phone problem. After 16 years, their telephone system in the whole building has been intermittently going in and out for the past three months. They can't get parts for it; it's an obsolete system. We may actually save money by redoing the City-wide phone system all in one package to get us all technologically updated. Theirs is pretty much stand-alone. The rest of the city was upgraded over the years, but because of when they built the building, they were left out. They are in the process of talking with different vendors and meeting with different departments. Only their building is included in this year's budget. If we can't afford to do the whole city, they're going to have to do theirs anyway.

Starting about three weeks ago, their radio system began having problems. One of their repeaters went down. They are told replacement parts for our system have not been available for approximately seven years. This has not been budgeted. We will get updated as they get information and costs from the different systems. Also everything in their building is starting to fall apart now. We're reaching the time when we will have to start dealing with it. They are looking at some major expenses down the road. He just wanted to make the community aware. He thinks we need to make people aware of their safety.

2. Fire Department Report

Chief Fabish: A number of sprinkler systems in commercial buildings had freezing pipe issues. Most notable were in Athenian Village in their assisted living section, and Royalton House on State Road. At Royalton House, at 3:00 in the morning, a three-inch diameter pipe sprayed above residents' heads. It was about 3 degrees below outside. The management company there is just fabulous...getting the residents into the safety area and managing the situation, getting the water off, getting the contractor ... Eight apartments were occupied. There were about 14 in the whole hallway. They did a good job of restoring it. At the Athenian Village, some apartments weren't occupied, so they had the thermostats turned down into the low fifties. They have everything under control now.

Otherwise, they have their normal situation with multiple calls going off at the same time and have been fairly busy. They also sent out letters on December 9th to all of the larger apartment and condominium complexes

management companies advising them of their responsibility to tell their snowplowers not to bury their hydrants; and they are responsible if they do. On Valentine's Day, the big snow, they sent out another notice of the same letter. And then they started going out because they couldn't find hydrants. They carry a metal detector in their trucks, and they were shoveling. He's already called them all to advise if they do that again, they're going to bill the hourly charge for an engine company — \$300 an hour for four guys to shovel out hydrants. They have to take care of the ones on our city roads after the roads are plowed, but they don't have the resources to dig out those on private roads.

3. Cul-de-sac parking citations - Report from Police Department

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch: We left it that Chief Bican was going to look into the department's ability to track violations and issue warnings for a first violation rather than issue citations.

Chief Bican: He checked with Skip about signage, so we could "re-sign" all the cul-de-sacs. Skip had already ordered the signs and planned on re-posting them. Chiefs Bican and Fabish thought perhaps we could eliminate the "No Parking" in cul-de-sacs, because the fire trucks are such that they really don't need the cul-de-sac to be a fire lane; but they didn't consider the rubbish trucks and school buses. They can't turn around. The good thing is that we do have the signs for all one hundred and some cul de sacs. There are a lot of them. Once they're up, we wouldn't be worrying about warnings.

Mrs. Miciunas: We've been having trouble with people taking the signs out. She thought a terrific idea — except for the snow — would be painting the curbs, "No Parking — Fire Lane."

Chief Bican: The salt eats away the paint so bad. That would be really tough to keep on. That's why we restripe the city. The salt makes it really tough to keep paint on pavement.

Chief Fabish: Painting on the curbs doesn't last. It's labor-intensive to spray-paint stencils on each curb.

4. Chapter 1620 Open Burning Code Amendments

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch: The notice went to Council to give any input on this Code to Chief Fabish.

Chief Fabish: The Law Director, he and our fire marshal met twice to come up with an open burning code. Tom sent him a draft which is much more comprehensive than ours now. It generated more concerns because some things were not clear. Our current ordinance is bare bones, but it doesn't permit much. This one is more expanded. They have to look at every possibility. He thinks they should have it by next meeting. They have done much work on it already; but it is pretty complex. They know what they want to do, and are trying to get the language to say what they want. If they have something they think is good, they will get us a copy before the meeting.

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch: Residents Mr. and Mrs. Fohs live on the north side of Royalton Road. From the copy of the letter received from Chief Fabish to them, they are having smoke concerns from a neighbor.

Mr. & Mrs. Fohs: They have lived there over fifty years and never had this problem. The woman who lived next door to them is deceased. She first got the problem when an individual who moved in was burning. She used to complain about it. When she died, her home came up for sale, and another individual bought it. Now there are two people burning. They said they don't burn green wood, but it has a very obnoxious odor. They burn in their fireplace. They burn outside too, in the backyard and in front of their garage. They like to cook outside. They're on a hill, and their chimney is even with the Fohs' house. It goes on all night, all morning. They're trying to sleep, and it gets to the other side of their house in their bedroom. The basement is full of smoke. They throw out household items. First they started with the EPA in Macedonia. The State turned them over to the federal on Ridge Road. The federal turned them over to Cleveland. Cleveland sent two investigators out. They didn't come

to the Fohs' property. They came to the two homes below them, and gave them a clean bill of health. They feel up against the wall because it's ruining their health. They also went to the Board of Health. Mr. Fohs told them he wanted some testing devices...he would buy and monitor them, so they can prove their case. It's very toxic. They start to burn in September. With how nice it's been, they can't even open their windows. In the summertime, they like to sit on the patio. They open their front door and their French doors and from the woods in the back they get the cool breeze that comes through. Their home is not air-conditioned. They get a layer of blue smoke which just lays there if there is no wind. They have to get in the car and leave. They have an underground garage. The inside of the garage stinks all the time. They even suggested a big fan to blow the air away. They chopped down and burned off all the woods.

Chief Fabish: The Fire Department has been there probably fifteen times. It involves resident (a), resident (b), and resident (c) — (a) and (b) like to burn. It is usually (b) that is burning right next door to the Fohs. Each time they've gone, they have been burning through the chimney. Burning through the chimney is not illegal. One night they had a smoker going outside of the house. Part of the problem is that the terrain elevation change is pretty dramatic. It keeps going up, and given the way the Fohs' house is constructed, they are almost level with the chimney next door. As soon as the smoke comes out, the winds are pretty much prevailing out of the west, blowing west to east. When it is cold outside, as soon as the smoke comes out, it chills and drops right down again. He had both (a) and (b) in his office trying to come up with a plan to prevent the smoke odor complaints and looked at some of the wood being burned. They burn trying to conserve heat in their house. He's not so sure that it's just green wood; but it's smoldering. They use less wood and get more heat by not having the flue open all the way. There's not a lot of oxygen, so they have a smoldering fire. He told them a smoldering fire is dangerous. They are going to build a lot of creosote; so they are going to burn their house down. He suggested they can open up the flue. They will use more wood, but we have to try to live on the same planet together without creating problems for neighbors. His first attempt was trying to get them to burn more wood, use more oxygen, to get a hotter flame, and not have as much smoke come out. That would be a big help. About three weeks ago, they were going to open up the flue to get a hotter fire and try to get the smoke up over the house so it can disperse. They said they would do that, but we are still getting some complaints. It's like a catalytic converter, the hotter the temperature, the better it's going to burn and have less odor. When it's cold, the smoke is settling right down on the neighbors. We looked at our nuisance ordinance. That is geared toward animal wastes and odors. The next step is trying to incorporate something in our Open Burning Ordinance. Technically, right now he can't cite anyone because they are not doing anything illegal. It is just very frustrating and irritating. Only on ozone action or air alert days can you not burn except for cooking. Our code isn't far away from the State code. The State code is more permissible than our current code. He invited residents here so they could have an opportunity to let someone else hear their side. We're looking at a way to come up with some language to give us some latitude. In his opinion, he thinks no matter what they may burn, given the terrain, the way the wind blows, and the lay of the land, we are going to get smoke. He suggested they look at extending their stack higher on their chimney. If they got it up maybe another eight feet, it might be O.K. Resident (a) said he thought he could do it. Resident (b) said no, and the two of them were arguing back and forth; but trying to extend the chimney was one of their conclusions. We tried to go in there and get the thing resolved. He thought we had made some headway in trying to get a hotter burn. He didn't see a stack added onto the chimney.

Mr. Stefanik: He went there. The problem is the two houses are set so far down the hill from the Fohs' patio, their chimney is lower than the patio. The wind is coming the wrong way and just pouring over it. He doesn't know what they're burning. It's hard to believe it is wood. He tried talking to them one day ...

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch: How do we legislate all of this? We're always open to hearing what the concerns are and if there is anything we can do. In summary, it sounds the way the code is now, there is nothing that can be done other than trying to work cooperatively with the parties to get them to live together. There is nothing you can cite them on. We don't have any laws on the books now to be able to give any immediate or definite relief. With the code changes we are talking about, she thinks it could be difficult to handle something like that. Are they using inappropriate material? And some types of wood burn cleaner than others. Obviously, it is not an immediate answer for the Fohs, but as we are looking at the codes, we will see if there is anything that can be

done regarding ongoing smoldering fires. She thinks this should be the focus; but we don't have enforcement ability to stop that now. We can only do what the codes say. Chief Fabish will remain in contact with the residents, and we'll try to work on it legislatively from this end. Has the Law Director given any input on dual rights?

Chief Fabish: He first thought about the nuisance code as a catchall. He looked at it, but we wanted to find another way. We'll be back down there. We'll go so we can list all these times. If we can demonstrate this is hurting people, there has to be some remedy. Everyone has rights. We can cite them, but I don't think we can really hold them from burning. If anybody has a suggestion

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch: We'll brainstorm it also, and if anybody thinks of anything, we'll let you know.

5. Traffic light functioning and removal discussion

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch: An e-mail was received with Lieutenant Chilcott's follow-up at 82 and Abbey. They attempted to fix it; but whenever there is a need for a replacement loop, they want it relocated. Is it working now?

Chief Bican: It's working. They have adjusted it as much as they can. It seems to be working pretty good. Ideally, they would like to move the loop. The one at State and Wallings they discovered had been improperly programmed from the start by the install company. He thinks they have fixed those programming issues. Part of the problem was also the striping. People were stopping past the loop because there are no stop marks. It hasn't been striped. That will hopefully be taken care of in the spring. We also found it was running in rush hour mode 24 hours a day, which was causing problems; so they reprogrammed that and it should be running properly.

Mrs. Bobulsky: Asked about the light by the old Tops on Sprague.

Chief Bican: He'll take care of that one. He'll try to put in a flasher. He doesn't know why we couldn't.

6. House Bill 347 Revisions of Concealed Carry Law - Report from Legal Department

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch: She has received nothing from the Law Director, so no action at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Safe Routes to Schools Project - Report from Chair

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch: Mike Kosdrosky is spearheading a joint project with the school system to look at making application for federal fund reimbursement for crosswalks and possible medians on Route 82. They would be mid-block; not in the intersection but midway, probably east of Ridge Road around the school administration building. There was a joint meeting including several departments of the city at the school administration building earlier this month. Concerns and opportunities were voiced. There is going to be a follow-up meeting next month. In general, the main concern from the schools is that they don't have any walkways. Once kids would come across the crosswalk, there is no safe place for them to walk to the school buildings; so they don't want to encourage children to use these crosswalks if once they get across they have nowhere to walk except a parking lot. Because of that, the schools and the city are going to be looking at whether there are additional funding opportunities the schools could benefit from to put in walkways, sidewalks, or whatever they may need on the school property to be able to connect.

Mrs. Bobulsky: The grant itself was specifically for K-8; so the connection is with the middle school. There was a discussion with the middle school about whether kids would actually be walking to and from school - probably not. She could perceive the high school kids using the sidewalks if they would be installed.

Chief Bican: He thinks if it is decided to put a mid-block crosswalk in after we just expanded our intersection to keep traffic flowing; he thinks a mid-block crosswalk would be an utter disaster.

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch: There are a lot of challenges with this. She thinks the general idea is that we want to move toward being a more walking-friendly community, but we have many steps to go through to get there.

2. DARE Program

Mrs. Bobulsky: She wanted to know the intention of the Police Department in terms of reinstating ...

Chief Bican: They're not going anywhere; so, that takes care of that. If they hired five guys tomorrow, they have to be with him for a year at least before they would even be able to start the program; but the school would have to revamp their curriculum. Does the school really want DARE back? There are studies going on for about three years, projected to be a five-year study, about modified versions of DARE that might be more efficient than the old way because it took up so much manpower. Akron University got some federal grant to study students who received the education. They are redesigning their curriculum; it uses a lot less man-hours to get the message across. One of the things they are coming up with is it may be just as effective to have school teachers deliver the message as policemen. At this point, he is almost more inclined to prefer a second School Resource Officer (SRO), and have the two of them take on drug education functions but not to the extent that DARE was. DARE was educational; but it was also a huge amount of PR which is fine if we can afford it, but at this point he can't see it. They're not getting any guys in. They take all the government classes, the seatbelt classes — stuff like that — and use traffic officers. Unfortunately, they're down a traffic officer. We're cutting so much into their time. If we had SROs and let them handle all the school functions, all the safety and seatbelt education classes, government classes, etc., it would get some of these jobs off the road officers. He thinks it would be more efficient. There is a lot to be determined yet. He just doesn't know if this is important. He hasn't really looked into it much, because without the manpower, what's the point? At this point, they probably have the lowest ratio of police to population anywhere in the county.

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch: He has been giving reports on that for the last couple of years. She asked if the school system approached him about it...if the schools are still getting flack from parents about its not being there? If it were a can of worms he would know, and then he could tell us. If he is not hearing about it, let's not open a can of worms.

The Committee agreed. Removed from the agenda.

Other Business:

Chief Fabish: A few years ago they talked about keeping car radios tuned into AM 1640. Strongsville purchased this. The guy who sold it to Strongsville is the same guy who tried to sell it to us; however, he changed companies. He called a couple of weeks ago and said, "Try tuning into 1640 and tell me what you think." Chief Fabish drove to Broadview Road, on Sprague Road, and was still picking up Strongsville. They have just one radio station. They have a different grounding system on the antenna. We have portable antenna on this portable device, and even their engineer said the signal is compromised, but they couldn't tell him by how much. Results speak for themselves. Strongsville has an antenna that is a fiberglass mast that goes up, with grounding built into it. They put the grounding into the ground; but it's an engineered antenna versus a telephone pole with an antenna on top. The signal is pretty impressive. He still doesn't think it will penetrate well into houses, which was one of his concerns before; however, he's not sure many people have AM radios in their houses anyway; and if emergency information is needed, you can go out to your car. They were cycling their loop of information

-they had their paramedic firefighting exam information on there, they had a sewer or a water building issue on there and a couple of other issues. How do you get people to regularly listen to a radio station? It is still a lot cheaper than a reverse 911, and it was pretty effective; so, we are going to hear him talking more about it..

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch: You're looking at this again as another option to the other two alert systems we've talked about in the past?

Chief Fabish: Given the cost. He hates to make recommendations until he has thoroughly exhausted this to make sure it is the best thing for our town. 1640 AM, turn it on, drive around and see what we think.

Mr. Stefanik: Why can't it be up now?

Chief Fabish: Because of the licensing. We don't have a license for AM. AM permits low power transmitters five blocks without a license.

Motion to adjourn made by Stefanik, seconded by Bobulsky. Approved 3-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:29 p.m.