

SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES

July 17, 2007

The Safety Committee meeting was held on July 17, 2007, at North Royalton City Hall 13834 Ridge Road. The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m.

PRESENT: Committee Members: Chairwoman Lisa Uffman-Kirsch, Robert Stefanik, Denise Bobulsky; Council: Larry Antoskiewicz; Administration: Fire Chief Michael Fabish, Law Director Tom O'Donnell, Mayor Luks; Other Attendees: Nick Cinquepalmi, Robert Tuttle, Dan Timmers, Joanne Dumound.

Moved by Mrs. Bobulsky, to approve the minutes from June 19, 2007, seconded by Mr. Stefanik. 3 yeas/0 nays. Motion carried.

CALL FOR NEW BUSINESS

None

OPEN RESIDENT DISCUSSION

None

UNFINISHED/ONGOING BUSINESS

1. Police Department Report

No report.

2. Fire Department Report

Chief Fabish said that hydrant inspections are completed. There are many aging pipes in the community and the inspection technique may be changed due to this. There is no progress to report regarding the status of matching grant for the radios from the emergency management grant. Chief Fabish has contacted Chief Sloan from Parma Heights who is a member of the committee and was advised there has been no action upon this item yet. The radios have all been received but are not all installed yet.

3. Safe Routes to Schools Project

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch reported that she checked with Mr. Kosdrosky today and there is no new criteria established by the state. There is no report.

4. Nuisance Fire Code

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch has not yet copied the information to the Fire Chief and Law Director. She will provide the copies.

5. Safety levies

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch was told by Mrs. Fegan that the Chiefs had a conversation with the administration. Chief Fabish said that the Police Chief may not have had a discussion yet.

Chief Fabish said he understands that there are several opportunities to put a levy on the ballot. The November Election requires only a majority vote, where special elections require a 60% approval which is more difficult to pass. The time is almost gone to put on a levy for November. Chief Fabish said it is important to have the levies to continue to operate. He said that Mrs. Fegan provided updated figures to him and he distributed and reviewed that information with the committee. The change from the previously distributed information is that one was increased from 1 mill to 1 ¼ mill. Chief Fabish said that the fire and police levies were renewed in 2000 and he said an option is to let it continue at the same rate. At the current rate of 1 mill there would be approximately \$550,000 generated for each department. At the rate of 1 ¼ mills there would be approximately \$800,000 generated for each department. Chief Fabish said regardless of the option that is chosen he would like to see it placed on the November ballot where the majority only is needed for passage.

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch said if it is a November election that is desired for the levy then there are two chances for that at a simple majority this November 2007 and next November 2008.

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch said that from the information provided by the Finance Director the recommendations from the administration are for Police Levy A and Fire Levy C to bring it back to the original amount of 1 mill. The figures were discussed with regard to the revenue it will bring. If the levies were to be placed on the ballot for the primary election in March 2008, there would be no additional cost to do so.

Mr. Stefanik said that in 2000 the fire levy passed at the primary and the police levy did not. The fire levy usually is the first to be passed. Chief Fabish said that putting it on the primary would at least bring it out for discussion and it could be placed on the ballot again in November.

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch said, regarding the fire levy that it appears under one option permanent firemen are needed or permanent part-time. Chief Fabish said that he is not certain since the language is a continuing levy that may need to be in there for the fire personnel. He said that emergency communication equipment is needed and would like to indicate that need in the levy if possible. Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch thought the levy options appeared to be broken into personnel or equipment/capital expenditure depending on the version chosen. Chief Fabish explained that the apparatus and appliances would not cover the emergency communication equipment; appliances usually refer to what is on the truck. Chief Fabish said that the levies usually go on as a pair for both police and fire.

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch asked if the levy examples given meant that both options needed to be placed together or if they could be separated and not placed on as a pair as with police levy A and B and fire levy C and D. Chief Fabish said that the critical choice would be for option C.

Mayor Luks thought they should be together. She would need clarification from the Finance Director.

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch thought the priorities would be fire levy C, the combined paramedic levy and the police levy B for personnel. She was not sure in the levy B version if that amount would cover the amount needed and thought that Chief Bican questioned this as well. The Mayor said it appears that the Finance Director is recommending levy versions A and C.

Mayor Luks said that she feels strongly that the money not be removed that is currently going from the General Fund to the Police and Fire Departments when the levy money is available. She felt that the levy money should be treated as new money and she also recommended that we cap what is currently coming from the General Fund to the Police and Fire Departments at what it is now and based on that the amount would be sufficient. As the General Fund grows the same amount of money would be sent. The public expects that when they are voting for the funds that they are truly new funds and the department personnel expect that as well. It would help to have everyone support it if we made that commitment.

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch felt it would be helpful to see on one sheet the total funding of what is coming from the General Fund to Police and Fire currently and with the proposals that the Mayor is recommending regarding the General Fund.

The Mayor thought it would be prudent to get the levies on the November ballot to increase the opportunity for passage and not leave it to the last chance of next November.

Mr. Stefanik said that there are many unknown issues right now with contracts still being discussed, the filing deadline uncertainty, and the commitment with the General Fund contribution to remain untouched in the ballot language. It is July 17th and this should have been presented months ago in order to get it on the ballot for November.

Mayor Luks said that Council controls finance, makes the decisions and the administration moves forward and puts it together. She will provide whatever is needed if Council will provide the direction to go so the information could be gathered.

Mr. Antoskiewicz asked about the memo distributed to the committee today with the replacing of 1 mill if this is going to increase what the residents will pay. The response was that there would be an increase based on the current value of the homes.

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch said that based on the discussion so far it seems the important thing is to gather a list of the information wanted. She asked what information was desired so both Council and the administration can proceed.

Mr. Stefanik asked about the ballot language needed in order to state that future money would not be taken from the General Fund. He felt that this would tie the hands of future Mayors and Councils. Filing deadlines for November and March are needed. Are levies needed to go together or can they be presented separately? How do we answer the question to the residents with regard to the passage of the city income tax where the promise was

made to hire personnel that were lost the previous year? He said he thought we replaced every department except for police.

The Mayor said she did not recall a promise to replace all personnel. Mayor Luks said she recalled saying we were down in all departments, but not that we would replace them all.

Mr. Stefanik said that it was said we were using the monies to replace people who were lost. The inference was that they would be replaced.

Mayor Luks said that we could not do it in one fell swoop and we are not collecting all the revenues yet.

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch asked what the point was that Mr. Stefanik was trying to make. She asked if he meant if we present the levies for additional personnel as opposed to replacement.

Mr. Stefanik said it would really be replacement personnel for those lost in the last year and a half or so.

Mayor Luks said that the staffing level of the Police Department prior to the replacement hiring freeze was in the best shape in terms of staffing levels. When we started replacing based on the revenues that are coming in from the new income tax, we had to go to where we were bleeding the most. We will not collect the full amount of the income tax until the third year. We will not be able to do everything the first year. It is not that we did not make good; it is not that we are saying this is going to be full replacement. Those replacements can happen as we are collecting the revenues in full from the income tax. We are not there yet, but police need to continue to collect what they have been collecting in terms of paying personnel. In addition they need to completely revamp the dispatch equipment.

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch asked for a financial summary that combines the information if the millage were increased to compare figures with amounts received currently, and proposed options of additional funds. She is looking for all figures in the summary to be shown in the same way, either additional revenues or total collections. She would like to see all current funds and the options for proposed additions all on one page. After the requested information is received then the Chiefs, Mayor and Finance Director can discuss with Council what is realistic as far as passage and we can decide when it should go on the ballot.

Mayor Luks asked for consideration to get some if not all on the November ballot. Mr. O'Donnell said he felt there was an August deadline to get the levies on the ballot, but we may have a Charter issue to allow for us to put it on within 60 days. He is not certain of the date. After discussing it with the Legislative Services Director he said the state law requires for 75 days and our Bond Counsel is more comfortable in following the state requirements in addition, it is difficult for the Board of Elections to comply with the 60 days. There is something in our Charter that says if there is a conflict that we will follow state law. Mr. O'Donnell will consult with our Bond Counsel.

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch asked Mr. O'Donnell about the previous discussion that the Mayor recommended that if the levies pass that we not take current money going to the General Fund to the police and fire departments and that we would put a cap for money from the General Fund to the police and fire departments to what it is now. She asked how would that be accomplished, can it be done by the ballot language and legislation.

Mr. O'Donnell said that the tax levy must be dedicated to the purpose of those entities that are having the tax collected. It may be required to have separate legislation to restrict the General Fund money.

The Mayor said that she did not think it would be necessary to guarantee, but that it could be the overall intent and philosophy. There may not be a way to legislate it. It can be demonstrated that it is the intention.

Mr. Stefanik asked that the deadlines be determined for March primary.

Mrs. Uffman-Kirsch will ask the Finance Director and Mayor for the items discussed tonight via memo.

Moved by Mr. Stefanik to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mrs. Bobulsky. 3 yeas/0 nays. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.