

CITY OF ROCKY RIVER

April 7, 2025

The Committee-of-the-Whole Meeting of Council was called to order by Mr. Furry, President of Council, immediately following the Special Meeting in the David J. Cook Council Chambers.

Council Members Present: Mr. Hunt, Mrs. Gallagher, Mr. O'Boyle, Mr. Shipp (left at 8:00),
Mrs. Morris, Mr. Sindelar, Mr. Furry

Administration: Mayor Bobst, Mr. Snyder

MAYOR'S REPORT:

The Mayor introduced the most important person in her office and that is Michelle Root. Michelle is the new Executive Assistant in the Mayor's Office replacing Mary Ellen Umerley. Mary Ellen is enjoying her time in Florida. They are moved and settled and retirement is working out well for both Mary Ellen and Jim. They devoted years of service to this community so it is great to see them enjoying retirement. Michelle comes to the city with a lot of great experience both in public experience and in the legal field. Michelle is also a resident of Rocky River in Ward 1. The Mayor added a big thank you to Mary Ellen who put together so many templates, processes, binder upon binder and sets of instructions. Michelle has already produced Oaths of Office and a proclamation that was presented. She has hit the ground running by working with the Record Retention Commission and updating all those files. She has a lot of initiative and the Mayor appreciates everything she has already done and has enjoyed every minute they have spent together. Thank you to Michelle for her service, kindness and respect to our residents. That means a lot and is most important.

The Sun Newspaper featured the city's new interactive website that was unveiled along with all its ADA Compliance features. It is a wonderful article about the website and its functionality. The administration was happy to see this article.

The Mayor shared information from Chief Lichman regarding the carjacking that happened at Race Fuel on Center Ridge Road. That crime was solved by Detective Asbury who was recognized by the County Prosecutor for his ability to use technology to get into mobile devices, cars, car tracking, et cetera. Detective Asbury has solved twenty crimes in the Cleveland area. One of the last three defendants was sentenced to 18 years and two were sentenced to 7 years each. The woman ended up on the ground and it was an unfortunate circumstance. This is some of the good work the police department does. The Mayor said to have an impact that solves twenty crimes, Detective Asbury is to be commended.

The Mayor said that Lieutenant Ron Flowers retired last week and many of the individuals that were in attendance this evening were in attendance last week and thanked him for his service. Ron has been with the city for 33 years with dedicated service. He has been on the Marine Patrol, S.W.A.T. Team, he was the field training officer for the police department, and several other roles. The city wishes him well in his retirement.

The Mayor reported that there was a sewer collapse yesterday. One home experienced a back-up. The city was able to stabilize it, but Fabrizi came out with the pumps that were needed. A big thank you to Fabrizi and Council for supporting that emergency contract. It meant a lot to that family.

The Mayor said that the Teamsters Contract was approved and is on Council's agenda. The companion Ordinance No. 20-25, which is the Wage Ordinance, reflects what has been negotiated. The Mayor will

discuss further when this legislation is presented. There are redlined copies available if anyone would like. This covers the Service Department as well as a portion of the Recreation Department.

The Mayor shared that this morning the Fire Chief announced that the city is in receipt of two Haas Alert Systems. This system interrupts cellular navigation and will send a message that there is an accident ahead within a half a mile. This is an investment of \$600.00 a year per vehicle. This is important to the safety forces and people on the roadway. The city had a ladder truck totaled a few years ago on I 90 because someone was not paying attention and ran into the back of the truck even with all the lights flashing. This alert system will add to the safety on the roadway.

The Mayor announced that NOPEC letters are going out to all the residents. The Mayor said that if anyone has questions, they should go to the very comprehensive website for both electricity and natural gas. Also on the website is a listing of several community informational meetings where they will answer any and all questions. This is a personal decision. The city offers NOPEC so there is an aggregation price point, but there may be others in the community that want to go directly to another provider. The administration cautions that there can be fees and penalties for moving back and forth with utilities.

There will be a new member tomorrow to the Architectural Review Board by the name of Christina Manco Schmitz. She is a wonderful architect that will be joining that group. The city welcomes her.

The Mayor mentioned that Director Snyder had an abstract that was submitted, approved and selected for presentation at the 2025 One Water Conference. This will be on Private I & I Reduction Program and the success of that program in reducing I & I into the sewer system. Congratulations Director Snyder.

Director Snyder was approached by ODOT regarding a decommissioned historical steel bridge that is available in Orient, OH. This will be used as a connector between Elmwood Park and Bradstreet's Landing. This is a very difficult area to traverse and a bridge would be the perfect thing. The city must acquire it by looking for grants and working out the logistics of bringing the bridge to Rocky River. Being in possession of the bridge will allow the city to secure other grants for the project.

The city received pinwheels from an organization called Canopy. Canopy is a wonderful children's advocacy program. The month of April is National Child Abuse Awareness Month and that is what the Pinwheel Garden is to signify and bring attention to communities across Cuyahoga County. They hope that all 59 municipalities display the pinwheels. The Mayor worked with the Community West Foundation and they purchased the pinwheels for the WestShore Communities. The City of Rocky River has the pinwheels displayed at the gazebo.

The Mayor announced that the Elmwood fencing is complete and they are now working on the dugouts and putting new pads in.

There is a structural engineer doing an evaluation that will follow with recommendations for the Ice Rink.

The Mayor would like to spend some time discussing Police & Fire Dispatch Consolidation at some point. They had another meeting today. The communities heard a presentation from North Olmsted about how they would transition WestCom into North Olmsted. There are still three options on the table, that being one of them. The Mayor reminded Council that the County put up \$3 million if four communities could fully consolidate police and fire. This work continues.

The Mayor said that Superintendent Barille from the WWTP along with several individuals from the WWTP went to Career Day at the Fairview Park Schools and talked about the work that they do. Many students don't know about these professions and the importance of these professions. The Mayor extended

a big thanks publicly to all of them, including the administrative staff, operators, and maintenance people that went over to the school to explain the important work that they do at the WWTP.

- Mr. Hunt commented on the sewer issue on Wooster. Mr. Hunt knows the family that was affected very well and he received a text from them yesterday that they were in San Diego and they had flooding and it was handled but it had started again. Before Mr. Hunt could send a text to Mr. Snyder, the family texted back that the city was already there working on it. Kudos to the folks that were working on it. Mr. Snyder thanked Council for passing this emergency sewer ordinance. It is at times like these that the city is able to do a band aid until Fabrizi can arrive. Mr. Snyder said that the city had to pump to pump the sanitary from one manhole to another manhole down the road, to bypass the issue until Fabrizi could get in there and make the repair.
- Mr. Sindelar added that Lieutenant Blazer and his wife are both John Carroll graduates. Mr. Sindelar has known him for several years and he is the first officer he connected with regarding an animal problem in his house. More importantly is that he has seen him on the water, around town in general, and all his kids had him as an SRO and DARE Officer. He is a role model for the police department.
- Mrs. Morris asked for clarification of the Haas Alert System. The Mayor said it interrupts the navigation system like Waze, Google Maps, et cetera. Mr. Snyder said this is linked to the emergency response vehicles and when the vehicles are on site, it will alert vehicles within a half mile.
- Mrs. Morris asked if the city negotiated a rate with NOPEC. The Mayor said the city does not negotiate. NOPEC does their own bidding with the suppliers.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: NONE

COMMUNICATIONS OR ANNOUNCEMENTS: NONE

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Ordinance No. 14-25: President Furry said that on Exhibit A, all changes relate to wages and benefits. The first is appropriations for severance payments for the Mayor's Office and Judges. Secondly, to move budget for the Planning and Community Development Administration out of the Building Department budget to the Planning and Community Development Department. The offset between the two departments is not one-to-one as an additional adjustment for the Planning and Community Development Director was needed. Director Holub of Recreation and Finance Director Thomas looked at the Recreation Department original appropriations and found the projection for full-time staff to be insufficient. It does not relate to a new position. It was not properly budgeted. Mr. Furry will be looking for passage on this next week.

Ordinance No. 15-25: Mr. Sindelar said this was introduced last week. RMH Concrete and Foundations contract to put in a storm sewer and sidewalk project at Rocky River Park. An engineer came out and was concerned about heaving or sliding of the hill by the playground. This project entails installing a catch basin and new curb on the west side of the parking lot to aid in protecting the hillside from water infiltration off the parking lot between the pavement and curb. The catch basin will drain under the parking lot to the bioretention basin in the center of the parking lot for infiltration. Mr. Sindelar will look for passage next week.

Resolution No. 16-25: Mr. O'Boyle said that this is a request for a council resolution which will verify that

the area of the submerged land lease is not needed by the city. The proposed activity is an armor stone revetment along the length of the property's shoreline and an existing revetment crossing the property line from the eastern adjoining property.

- Mrs. Morris asked if it was Wagar Beach. The Mayor said it is two parcels east of Wagar Beach.

Ordinance No. 17-25: This was read at the Special Meeting. This is for a three-year agreement with Teamsters Local 436 representing certain employees of the Service Division and the Recreation Department. There are time constraints on this and it needs to be passed within 30 days it automatically goes into effect. The Mayor discussed five bullet points of the contract.

- Article 7A: There was some clarity in the language of how an employee acquires seniority with regards to inner divisional transfers and transfers between the Service Department and Recreation Department. This provides clarifying language.
- Article 12: This discusses hours. All shifts have been clearly defined so there is no confusion between management and the employees. There have been several questions about that over the term of the last contract.
- Article 14: This is about promotions and job transfers. The probation period for an internal employee that is promoted or a new job classification went from 90 days to 120 days. Some of these positions are highly skilled and highly technical and it takes that amount of time for proficiency.
- Article 15A: This is about overtime and compensatory time. The city has not had mandatory overtime in the contracts. The city has wanted it and bargained for it many times. There is now language added for mandatory overtime in case of an emergency and the emergencies will be declared by the Mayor, Safety Service Director or the Service Commissioner.
- Article 16A: This is about wages. The 3, 3 ½ and 4% mimics the police contract. Healthcare is identical with no increase and an 85%/15% health insurance premium share and the HSA that a number of employees take advantage of. There was an equity adjustment of \$1.00 for wages in 2025 only. There were probationary steps within Grades A, B and C.
 - Mrs. Gallagher asked what the effective date is. The Mayor said it is retroactive to January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2027.
 - Mrs. Morris requested a redlined version via email.

Mr. Furry will be looking for passage on this next week as Council will not be meeting on April 21st.

Resolution No. 18-25: Mr. O'Boyle said that this is another request for a council resolution which will verify that the area of the submerged land lease is not needed by the city. The proposed activity is a modification of the existing submerged land lease SUB 1479-CU for the existing armor stone revetment along the length of the property's shoreline.

Ordinance No. 19-25: Mr. Shipp said this is to enter into a two-year lease agreement for concession services which would include Don Umerley's Civic Center, Hamilton Ice Arena and the outdoor swimming pool. It was not easy to entice vendors to have interest in this. This is more about the amenity for the residents, but it is a low dollar contract. They will maintain and use city owned equipment. They are responsible for hiring staff with a preference for Rocky River students to be supervised by adult age managers. The city will not be employing any concession-related staff. They do have experience and operate Winterhurst Ice Rink concessions. The lease agreement will total \$3600 for the pool season and approximately \$1050 for the ice rink based on historical sales with a higher rate in the summer and a lower rate in the winter. This will begin on June 6th when the outdoor pool opens. This will be read for a second time next week.

Ordinance No. 20-25: President Furry said this is a direct result of 17-25 where initially amended ordinance 76-24 but due to the Collective Bargaining Agreement of 17-25, Council needs to amend the amended ordinance 76-24 to handle certain employees of the Service Division along with certain employees of the Recreation Department. This was not finalized when this was passed before.

- Mrs. Morris would like the redline version of this ordinance also.

COMMUNICATIONS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS: President Furry announced that tomorrow evening at 7:00 p.m. at Rocky River Public Library, he and Councilwoman Morris will be speaking to the League of Women Voters on what it is like to be on City Council. This will be held in the auditorium.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS: Clifton/Lake Road Project Discussion

Mr. Shipp said that from what he has seen so far that has been presented, he is generally in favor of the project going forward. If there are hurdles, the city should try to get over those. He thinks there are ways around whatever might arise that this could still be a benefit for the community. Ms. Valerie Grigg Devis and Jean-Luc Devis circulated a memorandum through the Clerk tonight for City Council. Valerie was a city planner in her previous career, so she is speaking from experience being the person in charge of this memorandum. Mr. Shipp thinks the memorandum makes some good points. He supports the program in general and the project to move it forward.

President Furry came up with a list of Pros and Cons:

- Pros: The city could always do more for biking and walkability. He thinks it is a good opportunity to leverage the funding.
- Cons: He went over the survey and said it was from 1% of the population and it was all over the board from some pro and some against and some asking why the needs of the few outweigh the needs of the many. Some comments were from outside the city and he was trying to base it on Rocky River residents. Some mixed results at best.

Personally, he is not sure of all the costs and how they came up with that and would like to dive in deeper on that for how much bang for the buck the city is getting on it. It is not in the budget, but if need be the city could find a way to make it work. The budget is not the gospel but is the framework. Another concern is he is not sure of the funding. If Council wants this, he'd want it stated strongly that the funding is there, or the city is not on the hook for more than the original amount.

Mr. O'Boyle said that he has had a bicycle sitting in the garage with two flat tires on it for the last couple of years. One of the reasons he hasn't used it is because he does not think there are enough bike trails in the city. He supports moving ahead with this project as it would help people like himself to put air in the tires and get out to get some exercise.

Mr. Sindelar said that personally he has always asked about bike lanes on major thoroughfares when resurfacing. It has been in the works. He is for it in theory but the biggest thing is the cost. It looks like it is more than just a bike lane and has some real structural things going on. He is fine with that too, but it is the cost and does not want to lose sight of being smart with the budget. Money needs to be on hand for emergency things like sewers and aging infrastructure. These are priorities. If it is a County thing and they are giving out the money, is there a string attached. This is a balance.

- Mr. Snyder said he has the funding breakdown that was provided by Cuyahoga County:

- The total cost of the project including design, right of way, construction and the illuminating company is approximately \$13.6 million.
- The design cost, right of way and the illuminating cost is covered by Cuyahoga County and they are also covering about \$3 million of the construction cost. Beyond Cuyahoga County portion, there is a proposed fee not to exceed to the City of Lakewood for \$1.4 million. They Cuyahoga County received a NOACA TLCI Grant for \$500,000. There is proposed funding from NOACA of \$5.7. million and then the City of Rocky River's \$540,000 brings that total construction. The construction cost itself is about \$11.4 million. Lakewood's cost is \$1.4 million.
- Mr. Snyder said the City of Rocky River's input is \$540,000 and the estimated cost for construction, not including contingencies, is approximately \$2.2 million.

Mr. Sindelar asked if the city has input in design and planning. Mr. Snyder has been working with the County significantly. Some of the initial designs included overlooks, benches on the Clifton Bridge and it is down to a point now where the 28 feet, those two lanes on the north side are open with markings. That is the design that they have been working on. Mr. Sindelar asked if they were selecting the contractors. The Mayor said the County will be awarding the contracts. It seems to Mr. Sindelar, the city does things regimented. What is the time frame with this? Mr. Snyder said the County has been working through everything in the same manner the city does on our projects. There was initial field work with traffic counts and surveys, engineering, et cetera. It will be bid on and implemented.

The Mayor discussed the \$5.7 million. She has made a couple of calls and the thing that concerns the Mayor the most of those are EJ dollars. EJ stands for Environmental Justice and these are dollars that could be at risk. NOACA said this money is not in a bank but a reimbursement to ODOT. Because it is a local let project, the County will be taking the lead and will be the reimbursed party. As Council President said, if this is something Council wants, that contract is going to say that the city is in this for \$540,000 and not a penny more. It puts the County in a position where costs can increase. The Mayor has received some correspondence that this project does not enjoy her support. The Mayor is a cyclist, she thinks biking infrastructure adds to the quality of life in the community in large measure. This is not an insignificant investment for the bridge to Linda Street. The city must think about that in a few years, the Marion Ramp may be removed, and the city will have a new opportunity there. The city is concerned and does not want that to be a multi-use trail to nowhere. When it gets to Linda Street, where is it going? This involves the moving of catch basins and is a big project. This is not paving a trail and marking it. The Mayor is concerned about the functioning of the roadway. When Lakewood narrowed those two lanes, the city received many calls from upset residents. Lakewood can't do this unless Rocky River partners and does this project. The Mayor understands their need for this project. The \$5.7 million potential loss concerns the Mayor.

- Trevor Hunt said he has had numerous conversations with both the lobbyist and NOACA. There are two big pots of money funneled through NOACA. One is discretionary and the other is formula dollars. The \$5.75 million is formula dollars. The chances of a claw back bodes well for the County with a small chance of any of this money being clawed back. This money has been appropriated for fiscal year 2026 beginning July 1, 2025. The Mayor said it is attached to a program that has been discussed. Mr. Hunt said the future of that program is in jeopardy, but the money has already been directed to NOACA. That is his understanding. The Mayor spoke with Grace Gallucci who said they do not possess that money. The Mayor said that if this money didn't come, the city would have an agreement as to what Plan B will be. Mr. Hunt said that they will not hold the City of Rocky River to any more than \$540,000.

The Mayor said this is a lot of money for a short distance. The City of Rocky River wants it to continue to Detroit Road, out Lake Road and meet up with the infrastructure and bike lanes placed in Bay Village. That

is an undertaking. One of the Mayor's thoughts is to stripe in bike lanes. Allow parking on one side of Lake Road and put in a hefty painted bike lane with signs and sharrows on the pavement, and pilot it and see what the response is. There are plans drawn up from Bradstreet's Landing to the Bay Village line because there will be work being done and as work is being done, there will be more permanent bike infrastructure and accommodation, but for the near term there could be a possibility of striping the roadway. The city has lots of priorities including the family on Wooster with flooding, staffing needs from the Fire Department, et cetera.

Mr. Hunt said that as Council members, we are charged with great responsibility to be sure we are taking care of taxpayer dollars and making sure they are spent appropriately and efficiently. The city has projects and expenditures including sewer issues, EPA mandates, WWTP permits and those types of things. When he looked at the connector trail, he looked at it as a discretionary expenditure. The area around the I 90 exit ramp by Detroit to beautify that area, a connector trail from Elmwood to Bradstreet's Landing, additional parking at Bradstreet's, a pilot program for speed humps and bumps and slowing traffic down, tree planting, refuse and recycling, the needs go on and on. The more Mr. Hunt thought about this, he thought this could be a good opportunity. The number one complaint of Lake Road residents is the number of cars, the congestion, the traffic, the speed coming from further west driving through to downtown and maybe this could be a way to slow traffic and allow pedestrians and bikers to traverse Lake Road, he's all for it. He is not necessarily sold on the extent that the businesses would see some improvement. To the extent that we can cap the expenditure to \$540,000 and the protections are in both pieces of legislation and the contract for the work to be done, he is for it.

Mr. Sindelar asked about the bike lanes in Westlake. The Mayor said that Westlake does not allow parking on Hilliard. The City of Rocky River allows parking because there are not a lot of north south connectors.

Mrs. Gallagher said she has been following this since she was elected on Council. She attends the Community Forums along with the Mayor and others and she is 100% in favor of this. She has told people that. She has heard from some of her residents, and they are for this as well. She is encouraged by less driving. When she was on the Land Use Commission, she thought that the parking code should be updated because the code is antiquated with new buildings and parking requirements. She likes less cars, more feet and bikes on the ground.

Mrs. Morris is definitely for this project and those that would follow because she believes that if the city starts something, other things will follow. She thinks it will be a westside jewel and end up going downtown and keep going. It will highlight the westside neighborhoods like the MetroParks highlight Cleveland. It will be beautiful and beneficial to our neighborhoods and property values.

Mr. Trevor Hunt added that from a budgetary standpoint, the County would bid this in the Fall. An invoice would not be issued until early next year.

President Furry said that the next meeting will be a Legislative Meeting on Monday, April 14, 2025, beginning at 7:00 p.m. There will not be a meeting on April 21, 2025. Thank you for coming.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

David W. Furry
President of Council

Susan G. Pease
Clerk of Council