

Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Finance and Appropriations Committee Meeting

April 16, 2018

Members: Tim Gorbach, Chair
Jerry James
Mary Ellen Pyke

Mr. Gorbach called the meeting to order at 6:44 p.m. All members were present.

Legislation Discussed

Temp. Ord. A-30

Temp. Ord. A-32

Discussion:

Temp. Ord. A-30

An ordinance authorizing the Mayor and/or Director of Finance to execute a contract with a Regional Council of Governments for the purpose of administration and collection of municipal income tax in the City of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Bryan Hoffman, Finance Director, stated that during the last budget meetings, he had been analyzing the Income Tax Department due to the departure of the previous Income Tax Administrator and changes that have been made and talked about at the state level. Income tax is in the cross hairs of the State Legislature, and the City needs to be in a strong position to respond to it. Collection of income taxes by the City is at a crossroads and now is the time to make the move to RITA. He looked at continuing a City-run income tax office, joining RITA and also joining the Central Collection Agency of Cleveland, with two main factors in mind: Cost of service and customer service. Upon review of those options, the best option is to join RITA. They will collect income taxes efficiently and effectively and take advantage of economies of scale.

Mr. Charles Hawk, Marketing Specialist for the Regional Income Tax, stated that they met with the Administration on February 9th. They had a follow-up meeting on April 1st. Mr. Hunt gave a brief history of the Council of Governments and what it means in Northeastern Ohio and then opened the floor for questions. Mr. Gorbach stated that they have a skeleton crew in the Income Tax Department at this point. With RITA's expertise, the number of employees they have and the hours that they are able to extend, that's a great service to people filing. Mr. Hawk stated that RITA has taxpayer assistants. They have extended hours. They will go out to the municipalities and actually have a number of municipalities come to one location, and they will help people fill out tax returns. Cuyahoga Falls is only 20 minutes away, but if they need to, they can certainly do that here. The first year, they would help assist getting people used to that. They also provide assistance with tax preparers on how to use the system. They want a good transition to their service. Mr. Gorbach stated that it is important to collect the taxes and to collect them timely, and that doesn't always happen. There are times when the City has to take residents to court for not paying taxes. He asked how Cuyahoga Falls would handle that with regard to the service that

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RITA provides with penalty and interest collection and/or court filings. Mr. Hoffman stated that RITA does charge \$8 per subpoena and \$35 an hour to appear at the Stow Municipal Court. In many cases, that would be less than \$35 an hour, because Cuyahoga Falls would share with other communities that are RITA communities, because they try to get all those filed on the same day. Mr. Gorbach stated that RITA's legal representative explained to them that Stow Municipal Court sets aside certain days and/or times for the 16 communities that Stow Municipal Court handles and files those all at the same time, so those costs would be spread over all those filings. Mr. Hawk stated that it is very reasonable. They don't get charged the full bill; they only get charged a portion of that period of time that they're actually there.

Mrs. Pyke asked if there is an out clause for this if it isn't beneficial to the city. She also asked if a copy of this contract was available. Mr. Russell Balthis, Law Director, stated that a copy was e-mailed to everyone. They have to give notice for cancelation by July 1st of the year to be out by December 31st of that year. RITA is also very innovative in their use of paralegals, which is important to help reduce costs. Hudson is also a member of RITA and is another large community in the Stow Municipal Court. It would be rare that they would be going to do work there that they wouldn't have work from Hudson, so that is another community that would be sharing the cost and the hours of getting a paralegal or an attorney to perform services. Mrs. Pyke asked what impact this would have as far as reductions for the Law Department. Mr. Balthis stated that the Law Department, at its height, traditionally did about five or ten hours a week on income-tax related issues. Over the years that he has been here, income tax enforcement with the Law Department has ebbed and flowed. With the former Tax Administrator, who was also an attorney, there was probably had a lot more activity than there has been in the past just because of the available resources. Mr. Balthis stated that he welcomes the additional help from RITA and the cost structure. They will be able to do a lot more than they have in the past.

Mrs. Pyke asked who the City's representative to RITA is. Mr. Balthis stated that the City has not yet appointed a representative. The way their bylaws work is that someone will be nominated by the Mayor and approved by Council. Whoever is appointed by the Mayor and then approved by Council would then be the representative of the Council. Mrs. Pyke asked if there was recently a breach in information. Mr. Hawk stated that that was in 2013. Nobody's information was ever breached. He stated that he has the information and will give it to the City's legal counsel. What had happened was they have a disaster recovery program, and they could not find a record. What they think happened was the record was already destroyed. RITA owed it to those taxpayers to let them know that there might have been a possibility, but they gave them coverage for the last two years and nothing has been found on any of them.

Mr. Pallotta stated that RITA collects the revenues, and then there's a one-month delay to get those funds. Mr. Hoffman stated that RITA sends out funds twice a month. There isn't a one-month delay with RITA. If needed, they have also indicated that they do an advancement program for cash flows. They are pretty healthy on the cash side of things in the city, so he doesn't anticipate needing any sort of advancement or having any issues with cash flow because of any sort of delay with payments. Mr. Reilly stated that when he served on Council in Mogadore, they used RITA.

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He has nothing but good things to say about that. It's truly innovative what they do with the collections in the court system.

Mr. Iona asked if it unusual for a city as large as Cuyahoga Falls to be part of RITA. Mr. Hawk stated that it is not. Elyria is pretty close to where Cuyahoga Falls is at right now. Mentor has not had any issues. Youngstown, at 82,000, has no issues. With being so large, this might be a good opportunity for Cuyahoga Falls to maybe retain that Tax Administrator. A lot of communities do that where they're the go-to person. They are the ones that can help assist RITA through all the things they can provide. Mr. Iona stated that there was a situation where part of Peninsula didn't think it was Cuyahoga Falls, and they didn't pay taxes. If something like that happens with RITA, the City is going to be paying to have RITA and also is going to pay to have a Tax Administrator, because there needs to be somebody locally. Mr. Hawk stated that that is where the Tax Administrator would step in and help that out. RITA has a lot of resources, but the biggest resource is the city, itself. They are the ones to tell them if this is in the village or is this in the City. They use State information. They use IRS information. Sometimes they may have the mailing address, but it may in the township. Those are of the types of things where they are going to have to work very closely with the community to make sure that's right.

Mr. Iona asked what Mr. Hoffman meant when he stated that the City was at a crossroads. Mr. Hoffman stated that the State Legislature passed another piece of legislation that allows businesses today to file at the State level exclusively, and then send their information to the City, and then the State takes a portion of that as a fee. He anticipates them continuing down that path until they take over everything. There was an injunction granted earlier this year where a bunch of municipalities got together and said this is a Home Rule issue and local municipalities should be able to collect their own taxes under that. That was shot down by the courts who said the State has the right to do that and to collect taxes. He thinks it is a matter of time that something like this comes out of the State Legislature, and that it would be a real good thing today to band together with a bunch of other municipalities and a larger organization to hopefully stem off some of that. Mr. Hoffman stated that his plan is to have that person here locally. It's in the legislation to do that. Over the next few years, he would say that the costs that will be incurred will probably be very similar to what they would experience here, or maybe a little bit less because of the economy of scale that RITA has. They're anticipating probably having wage increases here, which is the main driver of costs. Whatever percentage that would be would be a percentage increase from where they are today. He has put together for Council a five-year projection on costs today. He could slide in what RITA would have as far as costs and could do a similar projection out. Over the past several years, their costs have been pretty steady and probably rise with inflation as well as other cities do.

Mr. Colavecchio asked how the Council of Governments works. When Mr. Hawk stated that a community of 9,400 has the same vote that a community of 50,000, like Cuyahoga Falls, that doesn't sound good to him. Mr. Hawk stated that the Cuyahoga Falls is sharing in the cost and sharing in the benefits that RITA provides. Cuyahoga Falls is probably going to benefit more from it, because they are a bigger community and going to bring in more revenue. As times goes

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on, and RITA keeps bringing on more cities, the actual cost of collections has gone down. It would benefit the City by being a part of Council of Governments and being part of RITA, because they are all sharing in that cost and that development, too. Mr. Colavecchio stated that there was another item that has been before Council in talking about entering into a Council of Government. One of the sticking points is because they are a bigger community, they would want a more proportional representation. He asked what exactly the Council of Governments does and is that a concern that Cuyahoga Falls would only have one vote. Mr. Hawks stated that one thing Mr. Colavecchio could do was run for their board. That's very beneficial to a lot of communities. He stated that that is just the way the organization was set up. It's one vote, one city. The huge upside to it is Cuyahoga Falls is benefiting significantly by RITA growing and bringing in more cities and more technologies.

Mr. Gorbach asked for Mr. Hawk to give Council information insofar as what RITA does with software and how much money is invested in upgrades. Mr. Hawk stated that he cannot answer that. RITA has a whole department that is dedicated to that. There are 30 or 40 individuals that are programmers, and they are constantly upgrading. If Council were to go to the website, they will see all the services RITA provides: E-filing, e-payment, registration. RITA is entering into agreements with a lot of vendors that do tax preparation. He does not have what the cost is on that. They are constantly upgrading and changing. He stated that he will see about a getting a dollar amount, but it's very fluid. Mr. Gorbach stated that the fact that RITA is continually upgrading and enhancing their online filing system and working with the tax preparers is big. Anything that makes it easier for those to file makes it more welcome for people to file their taxes and easier for the City to collect them. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that RITA's building is very impressive. Everyone is professional. It's extremely secure and state of the art. That is something that is hard for any government to keep up with. It is a nonprofit government agency. There is a lot of cross training, so that customer service is paramount. That's what the City want for its residents. Mr. Hawk stated that there is a new online way to file stated a couple months ago called Fast File. It is only for simple returns. It doesn't do schedule income, or that type of thing. They are moving towards that. They also provide a service where people can come to the Village Hall or City Hall to file online there.

Mayor Walters stated the he reached out to the local communities that do use RITA and also Mentor, which is about the size of Cuyahoga Falls. He has letters of recommendation from Mayors and Finance Directors in Hudson, Tallmadge, Peninsula, Boston Heights, Mentor, New Franklin and Silver Lake. Mentor stated that their overall experience with RITA has been very positive. They have consistently outperformed their anticipated costs to perform collections service. In 2017, the effective rate was about 1.4 percent of collections. They've also been responsive in resolving issues with individual returns when brought to their attention. Mayor Walters made the correspondence available to Council.

Mrs. James moved to bring out Temp. Ord. A-30 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mrs. Pyke. Motion passed (3-0).

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Temp. Ord. A-32

An ordinance amending appropriations for the creation of the Division of Neighborhood Excellence, Communications, and Community Outreach and to make certain other adjustments to various departments to streamline efficiencies, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Gorbach stated that this ordinance is a companion to two ordinances in Public Affairs, Temporary Ordinance A-36 and Temporary Ordinance A-37. Council needs to have information on the Neighborhood Excellence, Communications and Community Outreach. Without all that information, the Finance Committee cannot make a motion or a second to bring out just A-32. He thanked Mr. Brillhart for allowing that to occur tonight to get the information out there.

Mayor Walters stated that all four ordinances are very much related. When first took office back in 2014, he promised that he would increase communication with residents, work to strengthen parks and neighborhoods, identify any inefficiencies or gaps in departments and services and to address them to ensure that all of residents and business owners are best served by all at City Hall. This depart will serve two purposes: To strengthen the cohesion of community involvement through citizens and government, increase and streamline communication efforts and ramp up community outreach initiatives and collaborations with community support services, organizations, churches and schools. They will be reassigning existing employees to best serve the public. Through this reassignment, they would be able to leverage talents and streamline existing financial and human resources. Most significantly, this new department will serve as a central hub for communication to citizens that will help enhance neighborhoods, help drive and promote prosperity, and help promote unmatched programs and City services throughout the entire region.

Mayor Walters stated that the believes that the City's services and programs are only as good as the number of people who know about the benefits provided. He has been working to fulfill his promise to increase and improve communication between the City and residents. Social media has provided an incredible opportunity to stay in contact with residents through Facebook and Instagram, and remain active through CFO alerts and Nextdoor.com and the City of Cuyahoga Falls Citizen Update. The City newsletter contains information about businesses and overviews of events and endeavors around the community and at City Hall. The Falls News Press publishing the monthly Mayor's Minutes, which allows an added resource to keep residents up to date about what is happening in the city. With the revamped City website, they are able to showcase the beauty of the community, the wide variety of amenities offered, and the vast amount of City services that are available to residents and businesses. They will continue to find new avenues of communication as technologies evolve, but they need to create this department, because they need a dedicated team working on disseminating accurate information to the media as well as the public at large. They need this department to help promote local business districts and City amenities to drive residents, visitors and tourists to experience the new downtown, to engage in activities on the river and parks and promote neighborhoods to people to not only live in a place that is growing and being revitalized, but a place that is safe and safe financially. There has been tremendous development over the past few years, but there must always be a proper balance between the focus on development and the focus on the residents and respective neighbors. This department will be

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responsible for overseeing the Neighborhood Excellence Initiative and the Neighborhood Ambassadors to continue to allow our neighborhoods to grow and continue to be strengthened and that our neighbors are well informed about the programs and services that are offered to all residents. Through the Neighborhood Excellence Initiative, they can work to ensure that everyone who lives in our city has a sense of place and a sense of belonging. Because of the efforts of the Neighborhood Ambassadors, they have been able to have a three-on-three basketball tournament, have volunteers raking leaves for seniors, installed little free libraries and implemented a greeting card drive among many other events. They now have well over 100 ambassadors throughout the community, and he looks forward to additional engagement and expanded projects throughout the coming year. To grow this program and to remain successful, efficient and effective, the program must be facilitated to organize and provide information and resources to Neighborhood Ambassadors. This program has been and remains completely nonpartisan. Anyone that lives in the city can become a Neighborhood Ambassador and get involved in the community. This department will continue to grow and strengthen relationships with community organizations, our faith-based community, support service providers and our schools. Through schools, they have worked together on projects such as the City Logo Project, the All-City Art Walk, the Mayor's Youth Council, among others. They work with the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses on various community events. These efforts needs streamlined. When a church calls to offer to do community service projects for residents, they need a point of contact and someone to help their organization. When a school needs a speaker, or they need someone to coordinate a person to come talk to them and be part of an event, they need a contact person to ensure that their needs are met. This is a matter of providing more effective and more efficient services to residents. The Department of Neighborhood Excellence, Communications and Community Outreach will work to ensure stronger neighborhoods and sense of community, increase communication and communication outreach and streamline City resources through transparency and outstanding level of service.

Mr. Bryan Hoffman stated that he has provided Council with an overview of the reorganization of the City departments and resources that eliminates the Riverfront Centre District Department and the Riverfront Centre District Manager creating budgetary savings. The savings are being shifted to the Communications and Community Outreach Department. As a result of strong fiscal responsibility, debt in the Leisure Time Fund has been paid off and General Fund subsidies are no longer needed or required, because the Natatorium is performing well financially and the debt the subsidy was being used for was paid off in 2017. As a result of these changes, including the creation of this department, appropriations of this citywide are being decreased, in 2018, by \$124,958. In Temporary Ordinance A-32, under the General Fund, the Service Director Department is increasing by \$4,488. That is due to an increase in pay level to the Deputy Service Director, because of added responsibilities and because this department will fall under the Service Director. Under Building and Grounds Maintenance, there is an increase in appropriations of \$135,160. That is due to the shift of personnel from the Riverfront District. They are shifting those maintenance people over to the Building and Grounds Maintenance Department. Under Building Grounds, Maintenance in Other Operations, there is an increase of \$179,309. This is an increase due to the Riverfront Centre District budget being eliminated. They are shifting some of

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those other costs, being supply costs and contractual services and things of that nature. The next line is the Riverfront Centre District being eliminated. In Personal Services, that's a decrease and a savings with the position of the manager of \$194,338. The Other Operations line item, under Riverfront Centre District, that's a decrease of \$323,965. The Parks and Recreation, the next line item is the subsidy or transfer from the General Fund to the Leisure Time Fund. That is a decrease or reduction of \$229,696. In Other Operations, they are increasing that. That is the proportional share of Riverfront Centre District and some of the duties and some shifting over to Parks and Recreation. They're going to receive \$65,041. Community Development will also receive some other operations of \$20,500. The creation of the Neighborhood Excellence, Communications and Community Outreach line item, Personal Services is \$160,554, and also Other Operations of \$59,115. The next is Personal Services line item. This is because the City would be joining RITA. There's a reduction there of \$111,126. In the Leisure Time Fund, Other Operations, there's an increase. This would be due to the indirect cost plan in the General Fund. There are employees that were paid out of the General Fund. They charge the Leisure Time Fund for some of that administration cost. That would be an increase in appropriations to the Leisure Time Fund again paying to the General Fund for those charges of salaries and benefits. Overall, it's a reduction \$124,958.

Mr. Anthony Zumbo, Service Director, stated that he wanted to focus on the elimination of the Riverfront Centre District Manager position and the reassignment of the Falls River Square employees. These employees will become part of the Buildings and Grounds Maintenance Department. Several internal management meetings were held to ensure that a well-organized transition without the disruption of public service occurred. The Administration's intent is to fold the Falls River Square employees into the Building and Grounds Maintenance Department while capitalizing on existing resources and realizing additional efficiencies. He has met with these employees and discussed this move and does not anticipate that anyone's job duties are going to change very much. This move will align these employees with a department that performs many of the same maintenance duties at the current Falls River Square while at the same time affording a larger pool of employees to help alleviate time-off conflicts, as well as generate additional efficiencies. The employees are clear, with the opening of Front Street and the improvements that have been made to the parking decks, that work in the downtown area is going to change. The City has made a huge investment in downtown, and the Building and Grounds Maintenance Department is going to be at the forefront of ensuring that the infrastructure will be enjoyed for many years to come. This is not a small undertaking and will be accomplished by partnering with other City departments, primarily the Parks and Recreation and the Street and Sanitation Department, to keep downtown welcoming and a source of pride for the community. The Parks and Recreation Department will be handling the running of the pavilion and amphitheater, Flicks on the Falls, snow removal for the parking decks and surface lots, the operation of the ice rink, the operation of the splash pad and the maintenance of the boardwalk. The Street and Sanitation Department will be taking care of the snow removal on Front Street, leading the road crews and operations and providing sanitation support for the festivals. The remainder of the maintenance work will fall under the Building and Grounds Maintenance Department. Mr. Zumbo stated that he would be remiss to leave out the City contact for all the public events will be in the

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Neighborhood Excellence, Communications and Community Outreach Department. Their goal in the Service Department is to provide exceptional City service efficiently and effectively, and he is confident that the realignment will accomplish this goal.

Mayor Walters introduced Mr. Mark Bosco, Vice President of Marketing and Public Relations for Western Reserve Hospital. Questions have been raised whether this department is necessary and what a return on investment means for a department such as this. There's no one better to answer those questions than a person who is working and thriving in that field. They are incredibly grateful for the community partnership they have with Mr. Bosko and Western Reserve Hospital. Mr. Bosko stated that when he heard about the proposal at hand and some of the questions, his initial reaction, coming from 30-plus years in the corporate environment and working with cities in all of those years, is he was surprised it's taken this long for a city the size of Cuyahoga Falls to consider this in the growth and the success it is having. He is a big proponent of this proposal. Cuyahoga Falls is at size where a more centralized communication for residents is needed and also to communicate with large organization or small organizations. This role would allow for focused and streamlined consistent messages to all audiences, primarily citizens, Council, and staffs that work for the city and media. It allows for a single source to speak to all about the City is doing. Mr. Bosko then outlined other reasons why the creation of this department is vital to the City of Cuyahoga Falls.

Mr. Gorbach thanked Mr. Bosco for coming and for all the work that Western Reserve Hospital does in the community. Mrs. Pyke asked Mr. Bosco if he felt that all the information needed to support the Hospital and work with the City to promote the programs the Hospital was participating in downtown were served by the Community Development Department prior to the implementation of the Neighborhood Ambassador Program. Mr. Bosco stated that he did not think they were lacking. What has happened is the City has grown immensely, and the goals and the vision have moved into a broader sense, much like the Hospital has. His department has grown. It hasn't grown with the designers or the people who write the content, but it's been the outreach that has grown, because they do so much of that work and it's allowed them to present into different communities. The City of Cuyahoga Falls is at a point where the growth and the progress that has come could be amplified with a person focusing specifically on these communications, as well as bringing in the neighborhoods and the citizens to become even more engaged. Mayor Walters then read a letter from Laura Petrella, CEO of the Cuyahoga Falls Chamber of Commerce, supporting Temporary Ordinance A-36.

Mrs. Pyke stated that reading the title of the legislation and talking about appropriating the funds for the Neighborhood Excellence, Communication and Community Outreach and streamlining efficiencies, she is not sure that this should be one piece of legislation, because parts of funding the neighborhood program, in her opinion, should be by itself. She agrees wholeheartedly with taking the functions of the Riverfront Centre District and moving those to the Grounds and Maintenance Department, because that makes sense sharing those work forces. She would like to see legislation that shows strictly the money being moved into this program separate from the entire body of this movement of money. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that she would just like to say welcome to the 21st Century. Communication has changed entirely. Technology has changed

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everything. They need to change with the times. When the Mayor asked the Youth Council how they get their news, they don't read the newspaper. They don't even look at Facebook. It's Twitter and Snapchat. If they want to remain relevant, they need to be able to communicate to all the people, including young people. It's actually overdue. She is very pleased that departments are going to work with one another. This will improve the quality of life of the residents who live here. She is absolutely in favor of making their neighborhoods stronger, more cohesive, building community and making the people of the city a priority. Mr. Gorbach stated that Cuyahoga Falls is the second largest in Summit County and 16th largest in the State of Ohio. For the most part, they are continuing that neighborhood feel, and making proactive efforts to do that and getting people involved. They can't have too many people involved. They talked about the economies of scale that the RITA can provide the Tax Department, but look at the economies of scale the City can provide in helping to foster and improve these types of situations in the city. He stated that it is a great idea.

Mr. Iona stated that the Board of Realtors published, in 1996, that the population of Cuyahoga Falls was 49,687, so when they say that the population is exploding, that might be not quite accurate. It's getting bigger, especially in Ward 5 and Ward 8, but he thinks it may be strengthening in some of the other areas and they are getting more rentals. In terms of the excellence in the neighborhoods, who wouldn't agree that they should all be more involved and get people more involved. The thing that he is questioning is the funding. When they say it's not going to cost any more money, it is not. They are taking money from one pot and putting into a different pot to fund this. He had a couple residents send e-mails to Council. Their concern is not that they don't like the program, but they think it should be a volunteer program. They are looking at saying they are going to make our neighborhoods better, going to get more communities involved, but they are going to have to fund it with a specific bureaucratic new department. There is a Parks and Recreation Board and a Parks and Recreation Department that would deal with things like basketball games and bocce tournaments. We have a Community Development Department that would be able to handle some of the things. People get most information online. He is not sure they need a whole department to put that information online. Those funds could be used for something else. Mr. Reilly stated that he personally serves on a board of a volunteer organization; however, they have staff people to manage the day-to-day operations. There should be volunteer programs, but staff is needed to support that. He stated that Mr. Iona mentioned two different departments that can handle various aspects, but that doesn't address the streamlining of the process or the efficiency that can come from consolidating it under one department.

Mrs. Pyke stated that Ms. Crawford-Smith's current role in Community Development is the CDBG Coordinator, but only half of her pay is paid through HUD. She asked if someone give her what her other title was. Ms. Diane Sheridan, Development Director, stated that that was her only title. Mrs. Pyke asked what she was doing the other 50 percent of the time. Ms. Sheridan stated that she was assisting with communications outreach. Mrs. Pyke stated that Mr. Reilly mentioned that they need a contact person for that. Mrs. Pyke stated that in looking at Ms. Crawford-Smith's job description, she believes she is that contact person. She asked if Ms. Crawford-Smith would continue in that role, or would she be 100-percent CDBG Coordinator, or would she be streamlined into this new department. Mr. Russell Balthis, Law Director, stated that he would like to remind

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Council that, during this discussion, they can ask any questions they want, but if there are any questions regarding particular employees or personnel items, given the Ohio Revised Code, that is a personnel matter, and he would recommend Executive Session for those types of matters. He stated that he would caution Council to not to speak about specific individuals in open session. Mrs. Pyke asked Mr. Bosko if he was working with Ms. Crawford-Smith through these programs and communications with the City. Mr. Bosko stated that, at times, he was, but not always.

Mr. Miller asked if Mr. Zumbo would give Council a quick overview of the positions. Mr. Zumbo stated that he didn't have the positions right in front of him, but everyone on Council has been given an overview of what the positions will do. Mr. Zumbo then read from the communication previously given to Council the specific duties of the Neighborhood Excellence, Communications and Community Outreach Department. He then stated that he will provide a detailed list of the job descriptions, so Council can see how they fit into doing all this work for the City.

Mr. Miller asked Mr. Hoffman to please give Council a quick overview of the titles of positions and then the cost associated and salary benefits for each position. Mr. Hoffman stated that Temporary Ordinance A-36 has the breakdown of the positions. The Neighbor Community Communication and Outreach Director would a pay grade N31; Neighborhood Excellence and Downtown Administrator would be a pay grade N28. The other positions in this department are the Public Utilities Outreach Coordinator, pay grade N24, and Administrative Specialist, pay grade N21. He did not bring the wage tables, but would be happy to shoot those out to Council tomorrow morning as to the specific cost of each one of those pay grades. Mr. Miller asked if Mr. Hoffman would be able to identify and give more detail regarding the miscellaneous contractual services; specifically, the amount of \$47,320. Mr. Hoffman stated that he would be happy to provide Mr. Miller any detail within the department. Those were put together out of the current budget that was discussed last year. They would have moved the budget from the Riverfront Centre District to the new department.

Mr. Pallotta stated that there have been editorials and many conversations about this particular item. There are 11 councilmen responsible for every ward in the city. The Ambassador or any resident can correspond with their ward councilman or go directly to the Administration. There's a question that people have about the funding for these positions and that funding should be used elsewhere, because of the ability already to do a lot of social media correspondence. He would really like to promote the block parties. He has gone to every block party that he can in his ward. He encourages these people to get together and make their neighborhood stronger. He stated that he questions the money set aside for that program and it may be better used elsewhere. Mr. Iula stated that there are 11 councilmen in the city, 8 different wards and then 3 Council-At-Large. He looked at the Neighborhood Ambassadors. There are only two of them on Council that are actually Neighborhood Ambassadors, Ms. Nichols-Rhodes and Mr. Reilly. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that is correct, although all had been invited. Mr. Iula stated that he would like all of them to be Neighborhood Ambassadors. Democrats and Republicans have precinct committee people in the different wards. He doesn't know if they have been approached or asked about it. Out of all the Neighborhood Ambassadors, there were 40 Democrats, 5 Republicans and 5 Independents. Whatever activity it is, whether it's Front Street or something at Portage Crossing or neighborhood

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block parties, everybody on both sides should be involved. They hasn't grown in numbers, but they have grown in just making the city a better city. He thinks they can keep doing that.

Mrs. Pyke stated that she is very much for any type of community involvement that they can get out there. She asked if Council members could link their Facebook or website pages to the City's website, so if they want to put information out there for residents, they can link to it, so information would be available for them. Mayor Walters stated that he believes that under the category where City Council is listed, they can look if that can be expanded. He stated that he will talk to the IT Director to see if there's ways that that can be expanded with more information for each individual council person. Mrs. Pyke stated that the cost to get some of this information put out by an individual member of Council sometimes becomes prohibitive. For Council to be able to get out the information by perhaps the City website to be able to get that out would be helpful for them. She asked Mayor Walters what he sees as Council's role and will the information that the neighbors give him be disseminated to the respective Council members in the ward that those neighbor are living in. Mayor Walters stated that he wants Council to be involved in this program, as well. He would love everyone in the city to be an ambassador. Party affiliation is irrelevant and always has been. He doesn't see wards or boundaries. He looks at the whole city. He represents young and old. They need to reach out to young people, as well. That's the City's future. They'll be sitting in these chairs someday. His goal is to find new ways to communicate and get information out to everybody. Informed and involved is what it is all about. Mrs. Pyke asked if the information will come back to the Council members in those respective wards. Mayor Walters stated that if they are on that e-mail list, Council will get everything the Neighborhood Ambassadors get. Mrs. Pyke asked if Mayor Walters can make sure all the Council member are on that list. Mayor Walters stated that they will put them in the group e-mail.

Ms. Zelena Cole, 1746 10th Street, spoke in favor of the legislation. She is a Neighborhood Ambassador. Mrs. Pyke is her councilwoman. She decided to do this, as a citizen. Nobody from the City approached her and no one asked her political affiliation. She saw a flier and picked up the flyer, because she want to get involved and do something for her city. She stated that it is frustrating to hear they that she has been handpicked because of her political affiliation, because she never discussed that with anybody from the City or with other ambassadors. The Neighborhood Ambassadors are doing this because it is heartfelt, and they want to give back to their community.

Ms. Susan Truby, 2976 Devan Vale, spoke in opposition to the ordinance. She stated that, as a former employee of the City for over 28 years and Director of Development for 17 years, she believes she possesses some expertise and insight of what she thinks is very important. She stated that she also spoke in opposition two weeks ago on this issue and does not want to be redundant. She does not think the City needs to create four political patronage positions to oversee any of these jobs. Government receives a bad rap now, and it's apparently due to the increased cost of running government. The City can certainly perform all the duties of these positions with existing personnel. She knows that because they did it for decades. Ms. Truby asked Mr. Gorbach what specifically the \$50,000 listed under Miscellaneous Contractual Services is for. Mr. Gorbach stated that that was previously approved in the past budget in another department. It's the same

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numbers within the budget that were moved to the proposed new department. Mr. Hoffman previously indicated that he will provide Council with the specific breakdown of the \$47,320. Ms. Truby stated that if they have contractual services in Department A, they might not need it in the newly-formed department, so she is interested in seeing what those are. She stated that she would like to know what positions are being reassigned to this department, as well.

Ms. Cathy Arthur, 2187 West Bath Road, spoke in support of the ordinance. She stated that they are outliers. Nobody knew who they were there until she became an ambassador in her community. They weren't sure if they were Northampton or Cuyahoga Falls. They just knew they just were out there, and they liked being by themselves. Until it flooded, until the roads fell apart, until there were complaints, they just let it go. She felt responsible to them. She now knows all her neighbors. This is the cheapest program she can ever think of, because they are all free. Ward Council people need them because they can't do it all.

Mr. Thomas Sullivan, 447 Tallmadge Road, spoke in favor of the ordinance. He stated that he is a Neighborhood Ambassador. The idea of centralized communications and these programs have existed for years, but putting all of them to benefit the citizens underneath the realm of one area gets it to where they are circulating facts; not rumors. With social media the way it is now, wouldn't it have been great not to have to call a bunch of people over here on a Sunday to talk about an electric bill or tax problems, because they have one person they can take those problems to. This is a group of people that are concerned about their neighborhood and concerned about their city. It's a really, really good program. It's worth funding. The Administration has figured out to do it so that it's budget neutral.

Sandra Dixon, 836 Adam Run Drive, spoke in opposition of the ordinance. She stated that it sounds like the Neighborhood Ambassador Program is robust and loved and expanding, but she wants to assess whether the Administration should create and fund a new department with multiple jobs, salaries, benefits, annual cost-of-living adjustments and pensions when they don't know what critical need these jobs are going to fund. These are public internal relations jobs. There is nothing that points to a critical need to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars. From what she understands, the duties of this new department are already being handled by existing departments. Increased efficiencies are not hard-dollar savings unless jobs are eliminated. From what they have heard tonight, the proposal does not seem to detail any means to measure performance. She stated that it sound like there's simply a desire to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars a year on public relations patronage jobs. Cuyahoga Falls doesn't have that kind of money. Fixing their infrastructure is a critical need.

Mr. Joseph Brodzinski, 3071 Drexmore Drive, spoke in opposition of the ordinance. He stated that one of the things he thinks would help is for the administration to do similar what they did during the budget process and give a detail of all the line items to give a clear picture of for all of Council. Mr. Brodzinski then went on to reiterate many of the same things he stated when he previously spoke before Council on this issue at the last Finance Committee meeting.

Mr. Colavecchio stated that there is a lot of Monday-evening quarterbacking about the Mayor's programs and especially the dollars and looking at the nickels and dimes. The fact of the matter

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is the Mayor has grown the surplus from \$6 million to \$9 million in the City since he has taken office. He is doing a very effective job of saving tax dollars. With the State of Ohio cutting off funding or reducing funding greatly to municipalities, the Mayor has still managed to grow the surplus by 50 percent. He is popular among Republicans and Democrats. In the election, he won 40 out of 40 precincts. He's opened up Front Street, brought Menards, and housing and ribbon cuttings are going through the roof. The City is going a great direction. The Neighborhood Ambassadors will help make the city better and greater. The Mayor is doing a great job and I support his initiative. Mr. Gorbach stated that Mayor Walters indicated in his remarks that he campaigned on these issues in 2014 and again in 2017, and he's basically advocated for this throughout his entire terms of office. He doesn't think anybody at this rail is going to argue that the Mayor has knocked on more doors than all of us did. He's talked to a lot of people. Republicans, Democrats, the Green Party, Independents, it doesn't matter to him. It's about making the city better. Mr. Gorbach stated that he supports the initiative.

Mr. Balthis stated that he wanted to correct the statement that four political patronage positions were created. That is not true. In Temporary Ordinance A-36, section 4, the position of Public Utility Customer Advocate, which is a current Civil Service Position that existed in the City, is one of the four positions being renamed. The Public Utility and Community Outreach Coordinator will maintain its Civil Service Position, which restricts that employee's political activity. He stated that, without giving names, all of the positions are anticipated to be filled with current city employees. He would also note that the position of Riverfront District Manager, which is a political patronage position created under the last administration, is being eliminated. It is important that all that information is available to everybody.

Mrs. Pyke stated that she cannot support Temporary Ordinance A-32 in the way it's written because of Section 1. If they were separated off and there were two different pieces of legislation, her vote would be different, but, as it stands now, she cannot support Temporary Ordinance A-32. Mr. Gorbach stated that Mrs. Pyke is welcome to make an amendment at the Council meeting.

Mr. Jim Davis, from Ward 4, spoke in favor of the ordinance. They are starting a food co-op. It wouldn't have started if he wasn't involved with the City, and he didn't get involved with the City until this neighborhood program came about. When he heard about using Council people, he did a little calculation. Every one of them stands for about 3,850. He asked which Council person here knows all those people, personally, by name as neighbors and which Council person has a staff that can communicate with those people. This is an opportunity to get free help from dedicated people. This is not a Democrat or Republican thing. He is a Democrat, but it has nothing to do with what he is doing as a Neighborhood Ambassador. If somebody comes to him for information, they'll get it. If somebody comes to him for help, they'll get it. They may be afraid to go to Council, or don't have the time, but he is their neighbor and they can come to him. That's what the program is about. It makes perfect sense. He has heard people who objected to it say it's a good idea. He stated if it's a good idea, do it.

Mr. Brillhart stated that he thinks all forms of communication are great. The Neighborhood Ambassador Program is wonderful. It has been said a few times the rumors versus facts. It helps so much to get the facts out. One thing that he personally does in his ward is a newsletter, three

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or four times a year, that he hand delivers to every doorstep. That gives him an opportunity to see people face-to-face. He thinks it's important to have a department. It is going to help Council. Council is here to serve the public, and it enhances that. He strongly supports it.

Mr. James moved to bring out Temp. Ord. A-32 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Gorbach. Motion passed (2-1). (Mrs. Pyke)

The meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.