

**Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Public Affairs Committee**

May 21, 2018

Members: Mike Brillhart, Chair
Drew Reilly
Vic Pallotta

Mr. Brillhart called the meeting to order at 7:54 p.m. All members were present.

The minutes of the March 19, 2018 Public Affairs Committee were approved as written.

Legislation Discussed:

Temp. Ord. A-43
Temp. Ord. A-44
Temp. Ord. A-45
Temp. Res. A-46

Discussion:

Temp. Ord. A-43

An ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into a lease agreement with Riverside Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Fred Guerra, Planning Director, stated that this is a property swap through a lease with Riverside Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation, which is the Sheraton. For the last several years, the City has been looking at the ability to get more parking on South Front Street. With the development that has been going on and the restaurants, there has been a parking shortage. Weller Court was originally built for public parking because of the Sheraton. Almost 40 years later, the dynamics in parking have changed a bit. The City started talking to the Sheraton at least three years ago about potentially giving the Sheraton a portion of Weller Court and the City receiving the .60 acres from the Sheraton that was called the old Morgo property. They revisited this past fall. Right now, the City is able to make this lease agreement between the City and the Riverside Community Urban Redevelopment Corporation to obtain approximately the same amount of parking that is given up on Weller Court. The only difference in this is that the City has to create parking on this property. It's a lease agreement, which means that, in 30 years from now, if the City doesn't need all this parking, maybe a building can go on this site.

Mr. Pallotta asked who is going to be responsible for the maintenance and snow removal in the parking lot. Mr. Guerra stated that the City would be responsible for the maintenance of the parking lot at the Morgo area, and the Sheraton would take care of the section of Weller Court that they're going to have. Mr. Pallotta asked if that includes replacement of any asphalt or anything else that needs to be done. Mr. Guerra stated that, during the lease period, the Sheraton would take of their section and the City would take care of theirs. Mr. Iona stated that this is something the City really needs. If they are going to continue to develop the south end, there has got to be

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adequate parking. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that, in some cities, people are paying for parking in decks and paying an exorbitant amounts of parking fees. She stated that she thinks it is really important that residents and patrons of the City's businesses have free parking available.

Mrs. Pyke asked the amount of parking spaces on Weller Court. Mr. Guerra stated that Weller Court will stay public. Right now, there would be approximately 55 parking spaces in the area the City is giving up, and then the City would retain about 40 parking spaces. In addition, they would retain another 20 or so on Weller Court. Mrs. Pyke asked if the area that the City is going to lease from the Sheraton for parking be designed to complement the park next to it. Mr. Guerra stated that it will meet the City's development code requirements. Depending on how it gets designed, there will be between 40 and 50 parking spaces. Mrs. Pyke asked if this will be totally public parking and not leased by a valet service. Mr. Guerra stated it will be public parking. Mrs. Pyke stated she thinks there isn't a choice. They have to do this in order to promote the economic growth south of Broad Boulevard. There are other businesses that want to come, and they don't want to discourage them because, as of right now, the parking is limited. Mrs. Pyke asked if the Sheraton is completely okay with this agreement. A lot of the people staying at the Sheraton would rather park across the street than go further south. Mr. Jeffrey Lynch, General Manager of the Sheraton Suites in Cuyahoga Falls, stated that it is not practical for them to pave and use the south parking lot. It makes a lot more sense to have a lot across the street.

Mr. Pallotta moved to bring out Temp. Ord. A-43 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Reilly. Motion passed (3-0).

Temp. Ord. A-44

An ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with Falls River Phase II, LLC for development of 1816 Front Street, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio; authorizing a loan in an amount not to exceed \$300,000 for the purpose of providing public parking and increase appropriations thereof, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Guerra stated that this is another area the City looked at for parking. It really wasn't practical for the City to purchase the building. Testa Companies was doing Riverwalk, and they were really interested in getting more parking, especially with the restaurant. In order to add additional parking, this was a really good site. Moving forward, the cost of this industrial building was too expensive for any one person to purchase. There are two industrial properties on South Front Street now that need to go. This was another case where the City can work with a developer who will use that parking lot for their private needs. In the agreement for public parking, it will be a shared use of the property similar to what the City did with the Trailhead parking lot, which is shared between Triad, Metro Parks and the City. Testa Companies would get private parking they will use, but the City is guaranteed at least 60 percent of the spaces shall remain free public parking available to the general public. After March 2033, the City will have no less than 48 public parking spaces. Riverwalk started in 2016, and this would allow the Testa Companies to build at least 50 new apartments behind Riverwalk. This requires they would start construction in 2019. The City helps them purchase the old Swan Laundry Building, it gets torn down by Testa Companies,

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the City then shares the parking, and then Riverwalk gets constructed and, hopefully, other things will occur on South Front Street, also.

Mr. Brillhart asked, if this is approved, when would this building come down. Mr. Paul Testa, Testa Companies, 2335 Second Street, Cuyahoga Falls, stated that the owners are anxious to close. If Council approves it, they would have it down in 45 days. He had promised parking for his tenants that are going in. They've not started their development yet. Without parking, he has been paying St. Joseph Church \$1,000 a month to use their parking lot. He has held off with the development in the back of Riverwalk. If they can't get parking on South Front Street, then that's going to be his parking. If they do get parking on South Front Street, then that's going to be some beautiful apartments hanging over the river. They have been negotiating for two and a half years to try to buy Superior Motors. If they had that property, they could have wrapped around and come out and had another retail spot and about 100 units there. Until they have the parking, he is not going to close the door to the only parking he owns right now. It is imperative that they clean up South Front Street all the way down. There is a lot of interest in it. If this happens, it's going to cause him to move forward on Phase II and III, tear this building down and put parking there. They foresee a lot of good things happening there, but they need a little bit of assistance with the parking that the City needs to provide.

Mrs. Pyke asked if Mr. Testa could explain to Council where this property is. Mr. Testa stated that the property is right across the street from Hibachi. It's a green building. It abuts the parts store and then Hunts Bar, and it backs up into St. Joseph's parking lot across the street. Mrs. Pyke stated that she believes that that's an important piece of property that he is looking as far as parking, in that it does back to Second Street, so people can come off that way. She asked how many parking spots this would provide. Mr. Testa stated that he thinks it is about 60. Their long-term goal is to tear down the houses that Testa Builders own a little further the street and put town homes down there and more parking lots. Mr. Gorbach stated that he wanted to discuss with Mr. Testa the CRA agreement that was signed in 2013. Part of that commitment from Testa Companies in that agreement was to build out what he is talking about now. Mr. Testa satisfied part of this agreement with respect to job creation and some of the build-out, but he hasn't completed that agreement. That was a 50-percent tax abatement for 15 years. Mr. Gorbach asked if Mr. Testa could explain why he was unable to complete that agreement. Mr. Testa stated that, until they had parking provided by the City or someone on Front Street, if he had completed that agreement, he would have given up all his vacant land that could be used for parking. That was not a good use for it, but that was his only option. Coupled with that, they were unable to come to an agreement when trying to get the car lot next door. They were waiting to create a bigger project. As far as the tax abatement, the reality is that the City has a 15-year tax abatement, but there's nothing built yet. In his estimation, it ought to be changed so when he gets an occupancy permit, that is when the 15 years starts. It is vacant land. There's nothing to gain because they are paying on the land taxes.

Mr. Gorbach stated that that was not how this agreement was written. He asked what the impediments were to not being able to satisfy that agreement. The City didn't get any of the real

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estate taxes either, because it wasn't built. Council, at that time, signed this agreement to have that development completed and start benefiting from those real estate taxes, which was not done. In the current agreement, 4(F) speaks to, "The final phase of Riverwalk Development shall commence no later than May 1st, 2019. Certificate of occupancy shall be issued no later than May 1st, 2021." Mr. Gorbach asked Mr. Testa if he was confident that he will be able to satisfy the terms of the current agreement with those dates. Mr. Testa stated if they get the parking across the street they need, yes. Mr. Gorbach stated that he doesn't know how closely these are read, but, "The final phase of Riverwalk shall include 50 apartments." Mr. Gorbach stated that he thinks it should say at least 50 just to make sure Mr. Testa has the ability to build more. Mr. Testa stated that they were being safe with 50. It is all rock there, so they have to do a lot more work on it, but they have laid out 75 as they sit here today.

Sarah Parsons stated that she was representing at HiHo Brewing at 1707 Front Street. One of their major complaints from customers at HiHo is the lack of parking. Their parking has 31 spots. Once it becomes full, customers do not know where to park. They complain on reviews and sometimes they just drive by and, if there is no visible parking, leave. Next week, they are resurfacing and striping their lot to increase parking, but this can only do so much to help the problem. Another situation they encounter is customers parking at HiHo for beer are leaving their cars, because there are no other lots to park in on south side of Front Street, and then walking to Craft Beer Bar, grabbing a taco at Crave Cantina and back to Hibachi before coming back to HiHo to head home in their cars. They want people to come downtown and walk around the area. The problem is when their limited parking spots are taken up for the whole day, limiting their lot even more because of the lack of public parking. With new businesses, this problem will continue to get worse. They would like to see a centralized parking lot between Craft Beer Bar and HiHo Brewing Company on the south side of Front Street with public parking signage for customers, and public parking signage in the Triad parking lot.

Mrs. Pyke stated that the public parking lot by Highbridge Glens Trail is not well marked. The lighting that continues down South Front Street needs to improve in front of that parking lot. Coming up Front Street, the area north of Broad Boulevard has a totally different sense of safety and security with the amount of lighting there compared to South Front Street. They need to mark that parking lot and need to improve the lighting by that parking lot, so that people are encouraged to go down there and park. It's ideal for people going to HiHo, and it's very underutilized. Mr. Testa stated that the good news is there is a parking problem and people are now recognizing that Cuyahoga Falls has something to offer, and that's the best that could happen. Mrs. Pyke asked if this \$300,000 out of CDBG has been targeted for business and not taken out of any other CDBG Fund. Ms. Diane Sheridan, Development Director, stated that was correct.

Mr. Reilly moved to bring out Temp. Ord. A-44 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Pallotta. Motion passed (3-0).

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Temp. Ord. A-45

An ordinance amending Chapter 353 of the Codified Ordinances, relating to parking meters in the City of Cuyahoga Falls, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Russell Balthis, Law Director, stated that this ordinance is simply a cleanup ordinance to correct some small issues that were identified in the City's parking meter ordinance. They are changing the definition of "Upon the deposit of a coin or combination of coins" to "Payment." This is because the new meters do accept credit cards. To clarify the words, they wanted to be more general with the word "Payment," as opposed to restricting it to coins. The other change they wanted to make is the ordinance referred to the Violations Bureau of the City. The problem with that is that the City doesn't have a Violations Bureau. Practically speaking, where these citations would go would be the Mayor's Court, not a Violations Bureau. The City hasn't had meters for a number of years. Now that there are meters on Front Street, the Law Department feels these minor changes would be appropriate.

Mr. Brillhart asked how much credit card business there has been. Mr. Bryan Hoffman, Finance Director, stated that, currently, the credit card slots are a small fraction of what they are seeing down on Front Street. They are seeing mostly coin business. Mr. Iona stated that the reason the City has parking meters isn't to get a huge amount of money. It's simply to discourage patrons from parking in front of merchants for long periods of time, as opposed to going a block up the road and parking in the free parking deck. It's going to be small amount of time you can be there for a reasonable amount of money. It will spur people coming in and out. They don't want somebody camping out in front of the places, especially if there is someone who is handicapped or who needs to park close.

Mr. Pallotta moved to bring out Temp. Ord. A-45 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Reilly. Motion passed (3-0).

Temp. Res. A-46

A resolution declaring the City of Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio to be an immigrant-friendly, Welcoming City, supporting the City's participation in the Welcoming Cities and Counties Project and WE Global Network and authorizing the Mayor to execute all necessary documents to participate in said project, for the City, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Reilly stated that it was his pleasure to bring this resolution before Council. The Welcoming Cities and Counties Project is a nationwide effort to try to bring municipalities and counties together to try to talk about best practices and figure out ways that each community is dealing with an increase in immigration and also partnering with private organizations, to see what public-private partnerships they can have to increase the economic benefit of immigrants. The County and the City of Akron brought this on board in 2015. They partnered with the International Institute of Akron, Global Ties and Asia Services in Action. Those were five key stakeholders in that initial process. Through that network, they were able to bring in some funding from The Center For a New American Economy. It's a nationwide think tank that studies the impact of the

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refugee community on various communities. What this ordinance does is enables the City to enter into this network with already-established communities to try to collaborate and figure out what can be done to increase the benefit from the immigrant community. In Ward 1, there is a booming the Nepalese and Bhutanese community. Some of the complaints they might have about some cultural differences or some neighborhood disputes that are not as easily resolved because of language barriers are addressed with this, because this enables the City to find ways to integrate the immigrant community more fully into the community. This goes along with the Mayor's initiatives to try to neighbor strengthening and to try to bring our community together.

Mr. Iona stated that he was glad that legislation is coming out. There's a lot Bhutanese Nepalese-speaking community that are migrating from Pennsylvania into Akron. Seventy percent of the Main Street businesses that are coming to areas are by small businesses; especially immigrant businesses. If you look and at the area, the Village Deli at the corner of Munroe Falls Avenue that is now a Nepalese business; Stutzman's is now a nice grocery store. The City wants to stay ahead of the game with immigrants. They're hard working. They contribute tremendously to the economy and they are great people to deal with on a one-on-one basis. Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that this is wonderful legislation. Her grandfather came from Greece, didn't speak English, and he and his cousins started a restaurant in Akron. She loves that the City is going to be, in an organized fashion, welcoming people. She stated that she would like to add her name to this legislation.

Mrs. Pyke stated that she has been a member of the Summit County Refugee Task Force for a number of years. She read the report and thought it was a good report. What the report didn't mention was Waves 1, 2 and 3. When Wave 1 comes into a community, the community is obligated to do some things for them. They have to find primary care for them within six months, housing and jobs. It is a lot of responsibility of the community and, mainly, the International Institute, to be proactive when these residents are coming in. Now, if someone lands, which is what they say when they come to the United States, in Texas and then they come to the Akron, because they want to be with their family, there is no support system once Wave II and Wave III come. That's where the cities have to be prepared to step in. Mrs. Pyke asked if Mayor Walters will be sending someone to the annual conference in Louisville, Kentucky this June. Mayor Walters stated that they haven't. Mrs. Pyke stated that if they are going to make this type of committee, it would be the important for them to attend the WE conference. Mr. Reilly stated that he was at the conference in Atlanta in 2015 or 2016. It was an amazing conference. It's a great crash course in what other communities are doing. He would greatly encourage the Administration to see if they could send somebody.

Mr. Thomas Sullivan, 447 Tallmadge Road, stated that Cuyahoga Falls has had a real long history of accepting immigrants. Right now, they are talking with the Nepalese, Bhutanese. When he moved here and started working with Ruether Mold, there were 80 people there, and he was one of six people born in the United States. Cuyahoga Falls has long welcomed the Germans and Hungarians. These were true craftsmen. Not only did they work there, they lived here. In talking about having an avenue to help these people out when they need it, they need to give them an

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avenue with the government and the City by doing things like helping them pay their utility bills. There is nothing wrong with having immigrants. There were kids that left Children's Hospital walking in braces that Bart Crowley made that they would not have had had his grandfather not shown up here. His mother went with Willie Nelson through Wooster and Ashland County with Farm Aid and later became the director of the United Way in Ashland County. Regardless of how somebody comes into this country, there are people that have come to this County and made it better. Mr. Sullivan stated that all of the Council members need to sponsor this legislation. Mr. Iona stated that he would like to be added to the legislation. He would encourage that everyone show a united front that they would all like to be part of this legislation and make it unanimous.

Mayor Walters stated that they are up against a deadline or probably a bit past it for the downtown parade on June 2nd. He has heard from some Council members, but not all. He didn't want to cut it off and have anybody omitted that wanted to be in the parade. The next Council meeting would be too late, so just let him know, because he needs to give a report tomorrow.

Mr. Reilly moved to bring out Temp. Res. A-36 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Pallotta. Motion passed (3-0).

The meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.