

Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Public Affairs Committee Meeting
November 7, 2011

Members: Mark Ihasz, Chair
 Kathy Hummel
 Jeff Iula

Mr. Ihasz called the meeting to order at 7:28 p.m. All members were present.

The minutes from the October 17, 2011 and October 31, 2011 committee meetings were approved as submitted.

Legislation Discussed:

Temp. Ord. B-101
Temp. Ord. B-102

Discussion

Temp. Ord. B-101

An ordinance amending the Traffic Control File by providing for installation of various traffic control devices, and declaring an emergency.

Capt. Davis stated there were two items addressed by the Traffic Committee. The first is to prohibit parking on the east side of Elmwood Street from Pierce Avenue north to the first intersecting driveway. There was a sight problem on the northeast corner for cars stopped at the stop sign. The second item was to remove the “one hour only” parking restriction sign on the north side of Highbridge Road between State Road and 20th Street. That sign was installed when Rick Case Honda was in business and they needed to prevent the employees from parking on the street.

Temp. Ord. B-102

An ordinance authorizing the Mayor to execute an easement agreement with the State of Ohio, Environmental Protection Agency, establishing environmental covenants in connection with certain real property affected by the Cuyahoga Falls dam removal and Cuyahoga River Restoration Project, and declaring an emergency.

Mrs. Carr stated this is the first step to the dam removal, which will take place in 2012. They have been working closely with the EPA, who found the funding source to remove the dams. They plan to make it part of the Bicentennial celebration. She will give Council updates as work progresses. The group Friends of Crooked River put up the money to help the City do a modeling study. Mr. Demasi stated this has been discussed for the past ten years. It was approved by the U.S. EPA in 2003. The goal is to restore and maintain the river, achieve better water quality and increase the quantity of fish. The dams have been around for 200 years. In 1812, five dams were located in the downtown area. The current two dams were the result of the Flood of 1913. The powerhouse dam was constructed in 1914 and the mill dam located near Vaughn Machine Company was constructed in 1914-18. This will be done with a 100% grant. The City has received several letters of support. Future opportunities for this section of the river include Class 4 and 5 whitewater rapids, and it will also provide future economic development.

Mr. Ihasz asked about the study that was done. Bill Zawiski of the Ohio EPA stated he was the supervisor on the study called TMDL. The study looked at the Cuyahoga River to see if EPA standards

were being met and, if not, to come up with a plan. It is the EPA's recommendation is to take the dams out. It will improve the fish community, habitat, and chemical situation. He has yet to find any negatives. Sometimes there is concern about flooding. These dams offer no flood control, and removal will allow the natural flood plain to be restored. Mr. Iula asked how the dam removal would affect Waterworks, which already gets flooded. Mr. Zawiski stated the water will move down faster so there should be less flooding. Flooding issues may be mitigated by removal of the dams. They do not have control over other issues upstream that may complicate things. Waterworks Park is a flood plain and is meant to flood. The system is functioning the way it should. Mr. Mader appreciated the work the Crooked River Group has done to get things to where they are today. It will be good when the water level gets back to where it was. Mrs. Klinger agreed with Mr. Mader and added she is also ready for the gorge dam to be gone. Mr. Walters commented about problems when the Munroe Falls dam came down. He asked how much width reduction there would be and what would be done to keep people out of the muck. Mr. Zawiski stated what happened in Munroe Falls was that people came out over Easter and got stuck so he put up signs warning people to not walk in the area. Munroe Falls was a wide flood plain so it had a lot of sediment. Waterworks will not be like Munroe Falls. There will be some silt but beyond that area, there will not be any. Mr. Walters asked about the Edison dam. Mr. Zawiski stated he asked Ohio Edison in 2005 to think about beginning the process to remove the dam. They do not want to get stuck with the price tag. The U.S. EPA paid for evaluating the sediment. The first part was done in 2009 and the second part was completed this year. The results will be available in 2012 and will let the EPA know what needs to be done. Removing the dam will cost more than \$1 million. They will also need to work with the MetroParks. He would like to retire knowing that the Edison dam is out.

Mrs. Pyke asked what the effect of removing the dams would have on recreation. Mrs. Carr stated that is being evaluated right now. There would still be access for kayakers at Waterworks. Ms. Marsh stated it would depend on when the dams come out. That area of the river will become Class 4 and 5 whitewater rapids which will begin where the first dam is being removed. They will want to plan for safety reasons to have warning signs posted and also cables in case beginners get caught up in the current. This area will be for experts, and it will be spectacular. Mrs. Pyke asked why there wasn't a letter of support from the MetroParks. Mrs. Carr stated it has not come in yet. They are fully in support. Mrs. Pyke asked where the closest whitewater kayaking is that would be comparable to what will be here. Ms. Marsh stated it would probably be West Virginia, upstate New York, and Georgia. This will be very unique in Ohio. Mrs. Pyke stated she is excited about this. People are amazed when they find out that the original falls are actually under the Edison dam. She asked if the results from the EPA study were completed yet. Mr. Zawiski stated the data is being evaluated. A preliminary report will be issued and then the final report. He is anticipating that to happen early next year. Ms. Marsh stated that Friends of Crooked River was started 22 years ago. At that time, they sat down and made a list of 19 things they would like to see done on the river. Removal of the Edison dam was on the list and one she thought would never see.

Gary Whidden, 3430 Kellybrook, stated that the City's future is related to the river. When these dams come down and the Ohio Edison dam comes down, the City will go back 150 years. There will be crowds again and 150 foot cliffs. This is not just for whitewater. It has the potential to fill Front Street Mall every day. This is the first step towards that, and he urged Council to support it.

Mr. Iula moved to bring out B-102 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mrs. Hummel. Motion passed (3-0).

Meeting adjourned at 7:57 p.m.