

Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Community Development Committee Meeting
April 16, 2012

Members: Carrie Snyder, Chair
Vince Rubino
Mary Ellen Pyke

Mrs. Snyder called the meeting to order at 6:49 p.m. All members were present.

The minutes from the March 19, 2012 Committee meeting were approved as submitted.

Legislation Considered

Temp. Ord. A-44

Temp. Res. A-45

Discussion:

At the Administration's request, the Committee would discuss A-45 first.

Temp. Res. A-45

A resolution granting Council's consent to an extension of time for the sale of certain real property to Portage Crossing, LLC, and declaring an emergency.

Mrs. Truby stated there has been a lot of exciting activity at Portage Crossing with the announcement of some of the stores and restaurants. The City will be going to bid on the public improvements in about four weeks and construction should begin in July. The original one-year contract with Stark Enterprises was executed on March 1, 2010 and there were requests for two six-month extensions, which were granted. Stark is requesting an additional extension which would take the contract to July 31, 2012.

Robert Stark, CEO, stated the City launched a bold venture with this project during a bad economic time but it is paying off. The project started with a plan for 270,000 sq. ft. of retail which has increased to 400,000 sq. ft. 91% of the space is pre-leased. The project will also be completed in one phase instead of the two phases as originally planned, which will put the project ahead of the original schedule by two to three years. They estimate the project will be completed by Spring, 2014. Also, he revealed that Mennards, a home improvement retailer, just signed that afternoon.

Mrs. Colavecchio thanked Mr. Stark for bringing this project to the City and working with the City for this lengthy period of time. She has quarterly meetings with her ward and she indicated that some residents who live near the plaza were present this evening and may ask questions. The City is getting glowing, favorable comments and feedback for the project getting done in one phase. She asked Mr. Stark to talk more about the narrowing of Portage Trail and also the number of jobs. Mrs. Truby stated she needs to recalculate the number of jobs based on the Mennards announcement but, if she had to guess, it would be in excess of 600. With regard to Portage Trail, Mr. Stark stated he wanted to create a walkable environment. The most successful are main street environments. By turning this project towards Portage Trail, they will be creating a trailhead to the downtown and river. The most valuable asset in Cuyahoga Falls is the river. Narrowing Portage Trail is needed to slow traffic. It is a new urban principal and a strange one to us. The old school of thought was to widen streets to handle more traffic. When the traffic is slowed and there is parallel parking, it makes the area will be more pedestrian friendly. Also, Lillis will become an artery to connect to Graham Road. Mrs. Klinger asked what will happen to the old Giant Eagle property after it moves to Portage

Crossing. Mrs. Truby stated they have been working with Giant Eagle, who definitely wants to re-tenant the property.

Mrs. Pyke congratulated Stark Enterprises for bringing Mennards in. It is a popular chain. Mr. Barnhart thanked Mr. Stark for being so involved. He understands the concept and appreciates Mr. Stark's creativity. Mr. Mader echoed everyone's comments. He, too, appreciates the efforts and where the project is going. He is concerned with Giant Eagle vacating that property, especially with Woodridge School being in the financial situation it is in. Mr. Iula thanked Mr. Stark for bringing this project. He lives two blocks from the plaza and is excited about Mennards. Mrs. Klinger pointed out that the original one-year agreement with the two six-month extensions would mean the contract was expired. Mr. Janis stated that the contract has to meet certain milestones before extensions can take place. Mrs. Klinger is concerned that the City has sunk a lot of tax dollars into this project and that one box is being emptied into another.

Mayor Robart thanked Council members for their patience and thanked Mr. Stark and Mr. Rubin for their perseverance. He stated Mennards is a large store. By comparison, it is 236,000 sq. ft. and Giant Eagle is 92,000 sq. ft. Filling in the rest of the space will not be difficult now that there is the draw of Giant Eagle and Mennards. This has the prospect of being a great project. Mr. Brodzinski stated with Giant Eagle moving and shifting school districts, if nothing happened at the old site, it would shake out in 2015. Giant Eagle owns the property so it will not want to be paying property tax when it could get someone else to lease the property.

Dennis Brinton, 2951 8th Street, stated he is happy something is happening at the State Road site but there are a couple of things that bother him. The first is the narrowing of Portage Trail because that area is very congested. His second concern is the moving of Giant Eagle. The old Tops store is under the control of Giant Eagle yet it continues to sit empty. Mr. Demasi stated that a traffic study will be included in the public improvements project, including additional turning lanes and new signalization.

Donna Dowler, 1939 Silver Lake, states she has lived on the corner at Lillis since 1957. She asked if the traffic flow will now be coming down Silver Lake and Lillis. If so, she will have a difficult time getting out of her driveway. She also asked about where the delivery trucks will go. Mrs. Truby stated the traffic would be the same as it was when the State Road Shopping Center was in its heyday. The delivery trucks for Giant Eagle will be coming off Schiller. She has not yet seen a plan for Mennards.

Patty Spinelli, 2816 9th Street, asked how many more stores would be coming and she also asked about the parallel parking on Portage Trail. Mr. Rubin stated there could be 8 to 12 additional stores, depending on who goes where. Mr. Demasi stated the parallel parking on Portage Trail will be just like the parking in front of the Post Office on Second Street.

Mrs. Colavecchio asked about the structure of the traffic pattern and whether there will still be a right turn lane installed from Graham onto State Road. Mr. Demasi did not recall that right turn lane being part of the recommendation and added that the improvements to that intersection are complete. Mrs. Colavecchio thought that originally the traffic pattern would swing both lanes left and if there was a need for a right-turn lane, one would be installed. Mr. Demasi did not think there was a need right now. Mrs. Colavecchio stated he will probably hear from residents about that. She receives a lot of calls requesting that the lanes go back to the way they were.

Rosaleen Brady, 2721 Norma Street, was concerned about the parallel parking with the narrowing of Portage Trail. If it turns out to cause more congestion, she wondered if the area would be reconfigured. Mrs. Truby stated the street is not actually going to be narrowed. They are putting in a right-turn lane and also some parking. Traffic may be slowed by an additional 10 to 20 seconds. They are just adding different things as part of the street. They are also enhancing the intersections all around so there will be a

coordination of traffic flow. They rely on the traffic engineers to have that figured out. Mrs. Brady asked how it would relate to the widening of the west side of the intersection with State Road. Mr. Demasi stated the expert indicates that all intersections in the entire corridor will be at acceptable levels of traffic flow 20 years from now. She asked if there would be parallel parking on Lillis. Mr. Demasi stated there will be no parking on Lillis. Mrs. Brady asked what the length of the store leases would be. Mr. Stark stated the minimum is ten years with an opportunity to extend for another ten years. Mrs. Pyke asked who did the traffic impact study. Mr. Demasi stated it was Wells & Assoc. He was not aware of any other studies that company did in the City.

Mr. Walters asked if there will be a light for pedestrian crossing. Mr. Demasi indicated there would. Mr. Walters asked about the reduction of property tax if Giant Eagle would be vacant. He believed that the building and land would not change much so the benefit to the school should be about the same. Mr. Brodzinski stated there would be some change but that is basically correct for the most part. Mrs. Klinger stated she understood that the City applied for grant money for the road narrowing but it was rejected. Mr. Demasi stated that was not correct. The City received an Ohio Public Works Grant. It was a full grant.

Mrs. Pyke moved to bring out A-45 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mr. Rubino. Motion passed (3-0).

Temp. Ord. A-44

An ordinance approving the Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan for FY 2012, and declaring an emergency.

Mrs. Truby stated this is the fourth year of the second Consolidation Plan. The City received \$588,000 this year broken down as follows: housing - 28% ; infrastructure – 33%; economic development – 24%; and administration – 15%. There are strict guidelines on how and where the City spends the money. Mrs. Pyke stated in the past, the City had plans for the infrastructure at Stone and Germaine but the outcome was more money than CDGB could afford. Denise Bell stated a field survey was done and they found that it would be in excess of \$1 million so they decided to postpone it to see if they could fund it as an economic improvement. There was approximately \$22,000 spent on the survey. Mrs. Pyke asked if residents were told that the streets would be reconstructed. Mrs. Truby stated that discussion regarding improvements took place only at public meetings. Mrs. Pyke asked Mr. Rubino whether any petitions were done on this street. Mr. Rubino replied not to his knowledge. Mrs. Pyke asked about the 15% for Administration. Mrs. Bell stated they are required by law to keep it under 20%. Mrs. Pyke asked how the money received by the City compared to the amount received last year. Mrs. Bell stated that last year, the City received \$640,000. This year's amount is only an estimate. They have not yet received the final letter from HUD. Mrs. Pyke asked how many homes were purchased under the program. Mrs. Bell stated they purchased two homes last year, for a total of nine homes. She just received an offer this morning for the very last one. That sale should be completed by the end of May. Mrs. Colavecchio stated the City received \$765,000 in 2009 and asked if the downward trend was attributable to anything in particular, such as census results. Mrs. Bell replied it had nothing to do with a drop in population and everything to do with the federal budget.

Mr. Rubino moved to bring out A-44 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mrs. Pyke. Motion passed (3-0).

Meeting adjourned at 7:49 p.m.