

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

**July 18, 2016**

**Members:** Vic Pallotta, Chair  
Adam Miller  
Jerry James

Mr. Pallotta called the meeting to order at 7:21 p.m. All members were present.

The minutes from the June 20, 2016 meeting were approved as written.

**Legislation Discussed:**

None

Mr. Pallotta stated that the purpose of this meeting was to approve minutes that needed to be approved prior to the August recess and to allow the public to speak on issues that concern them.

Mrs. Pyke stated that she would like to acknowledge Mary and Steve Lowther, 1425 Chestnut Boulevard, who took on Chestnut Crossing as their Adopt-a-Spot. This is not just a small Adopt-a-Spot. They took on an area. They have worked with the City to bring in dirt and mulch. On the weekends, they are down there picking weeds, watering plants, but, almost every day, they are hauling water from their own home down there to water the plants. This is not just a husband and wife that said let's take this on; these are people that have done landscaping as a profession. Mrs. Pyke stated that she would like to acknowledge them and asked them if they would just say a few words.

Mrs. Lowther stated that they are asking for something that they hope is simple. They would like a water source in their area. They use about 150 to 200 gallons a week that they are bringing from their home. Mr. Lowther stated that they have a big trash can that he fills up with a hose and throws in the back of his truck; then they take sprinkling cans and just dunk them in the barrel and use the cans, but it would be a lot easier if they were able to just hook a hose up and have an actual watering hose. Mrs. Lowther stated that it would also be a little less expensive for them, as homeowners, with the water. There are other Adopt-a-Spots out there that are backed up next to a fire hydrant and have their own water source. There is a fire hydrant right there on one of the corners, and they are hoping that they can get a water source to help keep this area nice. Mrs. Pyke stated that, on 90-plus degree days, they are loading up their containers and hauling them down there and watering this entire area. They have done beautiful work and have changed the face of that location. She stated that, as a member of the neighborhood and as a member of City Council, she would like to thank them, because it's truly what they call the gateway on Chestnut Boulevard.

Mr. Czetli stated that he travels that way at least twice a day and what Mr. and Mrs. Lowther have done over there is fantastic. He has gotten comments from the Building and Grounds and different departments that supplement what they do. It wouldn't look that way without the work they do.

**Public Affairs Committee**  
**July 18, 2016 – Page 2**

Mr. Czetli stated that he doesn't think their request is out of the realm of what they could do, and that Mayor Walters just indicated to him that they are going to look at a way to meet their request. There is a fire hydrant there, and they will be working on that tomorrow morning. Mr. and Mrs. Lowther thanked Mr. Czetli and Council.

Mr. Pallotta then asked Mr. Czetli if he would want to address some problems with utility billing. Mr. Czetli thanked Mr. Pallotta and stated that he would be more than happy to make some comments about it. On June 13th, the City started the transition to their new utility billing software. That was done for a number of reasons. The largest reason, of course, is that the software they had was old software and was obsolete. The City made multiple notifications of that change. There was a half-page ad in the Falls News-Press. Notices were posted in the Utility Billing Department. On the City website, the portal for bill paying or viewing was posted and there were some bill messages. They have received a number of compliments about the changes that have been done. One of the biggest things they are able to do with this new software and the new billing is graph past electric usage for the past 12 months. The biggest change affected people who do e-billing. They had to re-register to pay online and had to get their new account number. Everybody got a new account number. So, the overwhelming majority of the calls have been from people calling in to get their new account number, so that they can re-register and can go ahead and pay.

Mr. Czetli stated that, when going through a conversion, you are going to have some hiccups. If anyone has any questions about their bill, they can contact the Utility Billing manager or assistant billing manager. Their names and phone numbers have been placed on social media. If somebody calls up because their bill isn't right, the first thing they ask is the person's name and their contact information. They do that for two reasons: One, they hold that information confidential, and, two, they cannot access a particular account if they don't have that information. Once they have that information, then they can respond to it. Last Friday, July 15th, they had an individual contact them about their bill. It was actually a very complicated bill in the sense that it was a little bit off cycle and, so, it was more than 30 days. This customer e-mailed them with a number of questions at 9:36 a.m. Teresa Hazlett, the Deputy Service Director, with the customer's information, was able to go in, pull their account and, by 2:30 that afternoon, had everything straightened out and explained to them. This customer then took the time and the trouble, the next day, to send an e-mail back saying, "Thanks again. I have been so impressed by the promptness and professionalism of your department in my conversations. More reasons to love this City." Mr. Czetli stated that although they're not perfect, if they have the proper information, they can promptly respond and assist customers that have questions or problems.

Mrs. Pyke asked Mr. Czetli if customers that have to re-register and get new account numbers can go in and look at their old bills. Mr. Czetli stated they're not going to be able to go in and see their old bills unless they contact them with their old account number, because they were unable to convert all of that information over, but are able to access that information. Mrs. Pyke asked if there are any billing cycles out there right now that are exceeding 30 days. Mr. Czetli stated that they have six billing cycles, and they might have had some individual bills that have gone over and been held. This software will kick out a bill if it is a certain percentage above or below what

**Public Affairs Committee**  
**July 18, 2016 – Page 3**

the customer's normal is. That is checked manually. Rather than send out a bill that's incorrect, they try to go in and look at it, assess it and, if they have to, send somebody out to get a reading. He stated that the important thing to remember is that when a bill is sent out, even if it is off cycle and it's more than 30 days, the customer is never going to pay for more than what they've used. Mrs. Pyke asked if the PCF was on the new bills. Mr. Czetli stated that it has been written out and may look different, but it is still on the bills. Mrs. Pyke stated she appreciated Mr. Czetli bringing Council up to date with what's going on with the bills.

Ms. Kathleen Egan, 2744 Fairland Street, stated to Council and the Administration that she has not received a bill since May. She said that she has called several times, left her name and number, and has not received a call back. She has been to the City Building twice, and no one can tell her what is going on. She stated that her electric meter no longer transmits, so she doesn't know if that's a problem. Mr. Czetli stated that they have written down her name and address and they will check it tomorrow.

Mrs. Rose Morrison, 2910 8th Street, stated she has called twice. She has not received a bill. The last bill she paid was at the beginning of July, and she should have had another one by now. Mr. Pallotta asked her if she has contacted the billing department. Mrs. Morrison stated she had and that they did give her a new account number. Ms. Hazlett stated they she will get her phone number after the meeting and contact her.

Mr. Steve Deak, 1831 Beacon Hill Circle, stated that he had just the opposite experience. He called at 8:35 in the morning and received his new account number. When it still didn't work, he was transferred over to IT, and, within 10 minutes, it was working. He stated he really appreciates that he got a prompt response.

Mr. Pallotta thanked Mr. Czetli for clearing everything up. Mr. Czetli stated that it was good that these folks took the trouble to come down, and they will get answers for them.

The meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.