

**Cuyahoga Falls City Council**  
**Minutes of the Public Affairs Committee Meeting**  
**July 9, 2012**

**Members:** Don Walters, Chair  
Carrie Snyder  
Carol Klinger

Mr. Walters called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. All members were present.

The minutes from the May 21, 2012, June 18, 2012, and June 25, 2012 committee meetings were approved as submitted.

**Legislation Discussed:**

Temp. Ord. A-69

Temp. Ord. A-70

Mr. Walters stated the committee is holding Temp. Ord. A-69 for two weeks when Mr. Ihasz would be back in town.

**Discussion**

**Temp. Res. A-70**

A resolution urging the Summit County Council to reject the proposed vacation of Wetmore and Oak Hill Roads in Boston Township, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Mader stated that Boston Township applied for permission from Summit County to vacate portions of Wetmore and Oak Hill Roads. There are Cuyahoga Falls residents who live on or adjacent to those roads. These residents do not approve of this vacation. There are health and safety reasons for keeping both of these roads open. Cuyahoga Falls needs to access the areas for safety and service reasons. Currently, a small section of Oak Hill is closed due to the road being undermined by a stream in the area. His concern is the lengthy detour that safety personnel would need to travel to get to the residents. He understands the situation that Boston Township is facing with the financial issues in maintaining those roads. There are no homes on either of those roads that are in Boston Township and, therefore, no tax revenue coming in. The Summit County Engineer declared the road to be unsafe. Mr. Mader has checked into Cuyahoga Falls annexing the roads, however, that is also a stretch because the repairs would be over \$1 million. Closing Wetmore would make it a cul-de-sac and residents would be isolated. Safety forces would be blocked from accessing the three neighborhoods in that area. Also, there are public school systems in Woodridge and Revere as well as three private schools that have buses that need to access the areas. The reason for him sponsoring the legislation was to send a message to County Council to plead that the City would not like to have those roads closed. He thanked County Council members who were present tonight to hear what is going on.

Mr. Walters asked if someone could explain how far along the process is and what steps are being taken on this matter.

Joe Paradise is Deputy Director of Engineering Services with the Summit County Engineer's Office. He stated that earlier this year, Boston Township Trustees approached the Engineer and requested to vacate three roads, two of which are in Cuyahoga Falls. Pursuant to the Ohio Revised Code, the County is the Township's engineering provider. There were three public hearings held, two field visits, and meetings with the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, MetroParks serving Summit County, County Council, and local residents. Boston Township's position is that they have 700 residents in the Township and cannot afford to

maintain those roads, especially since there are no Township tax-paying properties on them. The cost to maintain roads is getting higher. The County averages \$2,000 per lane mile to maintain roads in the winter. This past winter, which was mild, averaged \$1,200 per lane mile. The two roads in question are at the extreme limits in their communities so the costs are even higher. Boston Township asked the County to put together the documentation to vacate the property. The County prepared the documents, held the hearings, listened to people and made presentations to County Council. Wetmore and Oak Hill were placed on a 90-day hold so additional details could be obtained. Both roads have at least one national park property on them. In 2005, a load limit of five tons was placed on Oak Hill. An empty school bus weighs six tons. The landslide area is a 30-foot high cliff, with the top being 19 feet away from the pavement. They regraded the shoulder because it had dropped three feet and, two weeks later, dropped another three feet. This spring, they discovered cracks and several gaps at the top. There is also a stream weakening the embankment. Normally, it would cost \$300,000 to \$400,000 to repair the area, however, with the area being in a federal park, the cost goes up because the project will fall under federal rules and regulations. They have identified a funding source called Public Lands Highway Discretionary Funds, which the County has used previously. The process to vacate is started. It is his goal to get together with the parks and get their input. One suggestion was that Cuyahoga Falls take it over. The County did a study and found that an average of 146 vehicles averaging 48 mph travelled over Wetmore in one day. It would cost approximately \$560,000 to improve Wetmore and bring it to a usable standard. Traffic on Oak Hill averages 273 vehicles a day at an average speed of 37 mph. The speed limit is 25 mph. There is a dry hydrant available that could pull water from the pond below. The County closed Oak Hill because of the landslide, however, pedestrians, bicycles and horseback riders can still get through. The road is not safe for motorized vehicles. The County Engineer has recommended that the City of Cuyahoga Falls annex the roads. It is possible that 100% funding could be secured with the cooperation of Summit County and the park system. The County Engineer does not want to take the lead on the funding because it cannot force Bath Township to apply.

Mr. Walters commented on the funding source and asked how the money would be allocated and applied to this project. Mr. Paradise stated that they have learned to list multiple projects when they apply for funding. That way, they could pick from that list which projects they want to do. They would address the funds for Oak Hill first. Anything left over would have to be spent in the park. He added that they cannot move any current money to Oak Hill because that road wasn't included in their application this year. Mr. Walters asked if the County has reached out to any federal representatives since this is a safety issue as opposed to one of just vacating roads. Mr. Paradise stated they have not had an opportunity yet because the application process has not yet opened up. Mr. Demasi added that City representatives attended the May 14 and June 11 County Council committee meetings and shared their concerns and opposition to these proposed closures. They also had a working session with the park service to come up with various alternatives to provide access for safety forces and City services. They also visited each site.

Mrs. Klinger asked, in terms of vacation, whether the property had been deeded back to the parks. Mr. Paradise confirmed that it did. If the park doesn't want it, it would belong to the residents. Mrs. Klinger asked if the Township received money from the national park to help with maintaining some of their roads. Mr. Paradise stated they did get some money but not much. The national park does not maintain any roadways in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park. This is an urban development and the park acquires properties. The roads must be maintained to a certain standard. The parks maintain their roads to a lower level. Mrs. Klinger felt that vacating the roads is a bandaid approach for Boston Township. She felt someone should step back and take a holistic approach. She stated it was too bad the Township had to go to this length to meet its budget needs. Mr. Demasi added that the parks have indicated they do not oppose the closures. If the closures do occur, the parks will consider them as park access roads. They could remove the asphalt pavement and replace it with something else.

Chuck Novak stated that most of what he had to say has already been said as far as what this means to the City. They service residents on both of these roads. He feels the City would have to drive much further to plow and salt the roads than Boston Twp. has to go. On Oak Hill, they have to go outside the City's

jurisdiction so that the trucks can turn around. With these closures, they will need to find some other way to turn the large vehicles around. The same situation will be faced by the school buses, fire trucks, moving trucks, etc. The question he has is if grants can be applied for their share with the County, why couldn't Boston Twp. and the County get together rather than having the City annex the area and apply. Also, with the little amount of traffic that travels on these roads, he was concerned that County Council may not want to apply for a grant for these roads and would apply for roads that have more residents on them.

Mr. Paradise stated that about 1-1/2 years ago, the federal government asked for applications for grants. In the first two rounds of funding, the County requested small numbers and were told to apply for bigger projects. They then put together a cost estimate for work on all County and township roads and/or bridges. The resulting application was for \$80.5 million worth of projects. They did not receive any. In using County money for a road serving 146 drivers, he has little room to say it is the best use of the money. However, if he can say it is for 146 drivers plus the whole city of Cuyahoga Falls, he has room to defend himself. Mr. Novak stated if the City were to go through with annexing the Township, what would the likelihood be that the County would want to apply for a grant for a road with low average daily traffic. Mr. Paradise stated they would be working with a partner to reach out to the government to help both. If there wouldn't be a joint venture, he could not justify it. They need as many people supporting the project as possible if it is going to be done. Mr. Walters pointed out that the City could support the project without going through annexation because it does have an interest in this.

Fred Jackson, Assistant Fire Chief, stated that the fire department has put out a house fire on Oak Hill and has fought fires on Wetmore. Both areas are challenging. Anytime you have a tanker shuttle, it is a challenge. On Oak Hill, the department protects the addresses from 2933 to 3150. They would also receive a call for mutual aid for the house just beyond the barricade in Boston Township. The department provides mutual aid approximately 61 times a year. The City, Valley, Richfield, and Bath Fire Depts. are part of the District 10 Water Shuttle System. Delivery distance is very important. He does not like to pump out of a lake because if the pump sucks up a rock or two, the pump would be destroyed and would then be out of service. The last time a pump was out of service, it was out for a month. The closest hydrant is .4 mi. away from the area. The second closest is 1.4 mi. To the south, the closest hydrant would be either 2 or 4 miles depending on which hydrant is used. The complete loop to get around the closed road would be 5.2 miles. In a case of mutual aid, it would be an additional four miles for Richfield. He strongly requests Council to support some kind of resolution to protect that area.

Mr. Mader stated as he understands it, there is a 60-day hold on this for the purpose of researching to see if something can be worked out with all the different communities involved. He spoke with the park people and they confirmed they would let the roads go back to trails. The Park does not have the equipment to maintain roads. For them to get that kind of maintenance capability, it would take an act of Congress to get it done. Hopefully, there can be some kind of joint program with everyone involved to resolve this issue.

Mrs. Snyder moved to bring out A-70 with a favorable recommendation, second by Mrs. Klinger. Motion passed (3-0).

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.