

**Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Community Development Committee**

March 4, 2024

Members: Joe Siegfert, Chair
Brian Ashton, Vice-Chair
Mary Nichols-Rhodes
Susan Spinner
Meika Penta

Mr. Siegfert called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. All members were present.

The minutes of the October 2, 2023 Community Development Committee meeting were approved as written.

Legislation Discussed:

Temp. Res. A-28
Temp. Ord. A-31

Discussion:

Temp. Res. A-28

A resolution authorizing the Mayor to apply for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Clean Ohio Trails Fund Grant and to obligate funds for the required match to construct Phase II of the Mud Brook Greenway, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Rob Kurtz, Planning Director, presented Temporary Resolution A-29 to Council. Mr. Kurtz stated that he is requesting the approval of Council to apply for a grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) through the 2024 Clean Ohio Trails Fund (COTF) program and commit the required match estimated to be \$700,000. The estimated cost of this project is \$1,200,000 and the maximum grant amount for this program is \$500,000. Grant notification is expected late 2024. Therefore, if awarded, construction would likely begin in 2025 and these funds will be budgeted and appropriated accordingly.

The proposed trail, Mill Pond/Mud Brook Greenway Phase II, is 0.94 mile in length and will be constructed as an 8-foot wide chip and seal paved trail similar to the recently completed trail north of Bath Road (Phase I). The trail will also include boardwalks to traverse the wetlands and a bridge to cross Mill Pond. The proposed trail would begin at East Bath Road and Old Mill Drive where Mill Pond-Mud Brook Greenway Phase I terminates. The trail would extend south within City right-of-way or City-owned property and end at Peoplecare Park Drive.

Mr. Kurtz stated that this grant notification will be in late 2024. They found out in December of last year that they did not receive the grant. If they are successful this time, construction would begin in early 2025. They are asking for funds for the construction, not the engineering services.

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Mr. Siegfert stated that these are trails that are going to connect neighborhoods and help connect people to businesses. This project will create the walkability that modern cities want. The total project cost \$1.2 million. As an avid runner and hiker, this is exciting for him and exciting for the City.

Mrs. Spinner thanked the City, as always, for everything they do to apply for grant money to do these wonderful projects in the city. It is amazing to hear about how much money they are getting. It is unfortunate that it did not go through last time, but she is confident it will this time.

Mr. Brillhart thanked the Administration for this project. He is on the current trail almost every day. People love it and it is widely used. It is anxiously anticipated to have it continue on the other side. They are all so grateful for this trail. It is a jewel right in the middle of the area.

Mr. Balthis stated that it is an exciting project and these trails are important. He asked if the current plan addresses parking. There is parking available in a parking lot right across the street next to the old barn. He may have seen, at one time, plans that they could possibly add a few spots on some of the rights-of-way on Bath Road. He asked if there is any thought regarding additional parking at any either one of the two trailheads.

Mr. Kurtz stated that it is not planned yet, but it could be in the engineering design plan. No large-scale parking was proposed. There may be some space available at the Bath trailhead. At Peoplecare Park, they have a Buffalo Wild Wings under construction, so they may enter into an agreement to use some of their parking as well. They will need their easement to get across one of the properties.

Mr. Ashton moved to bring out Temp. Res. A-28 with a favorable recommendation, second by Ms. Nichols-Rhodes. Motion passed (5-0).

Temp. Ord. A-31

An ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into a permit agreement with Front & Center LTD to use a portion of City property for the purpose of constructing and maintaining a deck at property located at 2225 Front Street, and declaring an emergency.

Ms. Diana Colavecchio, Community Development Director, and Ms. Sara Kline, Parks and Recreation Superintendent, presented Temporary Ordinance A-31 to Council. The Mayor will be authorized to enter into a permit agreement with Front & Center LTD to use a portion of City property for the purpose of constructing and maintaining a deck used for outdoor seating at property located at 2225 Front St. (Parcel No. 02-188225). The proposed construction is depicted in the site plan attached to the original ordinance as Exhibit “A.”

Ms. Colavecchio stated that their department has been working diligently with the owner of the Cashmere Cricket and The Vacancy, Mr. Mitch Pachta, and the owner of Front and Center, LTD, Mr. John Chlebina. Mr. Pachta is going to open another tavern which is under construction called

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The Vacancy. The City has been working with them and, as part and parcel of working to get The Vacancy open, they have been looking at the parcel that is right next to the building, which is vacant but has a deteriorated set of stairs that connect Front Street with Riverfront Parkway. Parks and Recreation had a design concept in mind for that area and, just as they were ready to roll that out, Mr. Pachta and Mr. Chlebina provided them with a proposal for this deck.

Ms. Kline stated that that piece of property is currently in disrepair. As Front Street continues to evolve, the Parks Department is continuing to seek out ways, in collaboration with the Engineering Department, Service Department and Community Development Department, to repurpose public space so it is more inviting and allows people to utilize the amenities on Front Street. With a little detour with The Vacancy, they would like to relandscape that, fix those steps, make it so that there are some spaces for visitors with mobile challenges or people with strollers toward the sidewalk and to make it inviting and maybe have some built-in games or something like that. They banked the budget from last year and rolled it into this year. In short, their plan is to make it an inviting public space that people can use. When asked what the timeline would be for this project, Ms. Kline stated that it will depend on The Vacancy project that is being proposed. There might be things that Parks and Recreation may want to do that would impact their construction and vice-versa, so they put everything on hold until the process plays out and they can reassess the amount of space that is left and what that looks like visually.

Mr. Chlebina stated that the plan would provide seating for 22 additional people. The Cashmere Cricket currently has a deck off the rear that is utilized in better weather. Mr. Pachta was looking for some additional seating where, during the better weather, he could utilize this deck like he does at the Cashmere Cricket. He has been really successful there. He turns people away, especially on weekends, where there is a crazy amount of demand, and that is why he is coming in here, hopefully, with Council's approval. Mr. David Pellegra is the architect for the building and for the deck, so he would need to finalize his plans for submittal to the Building Department. That will take at least 30 days. Once they get approval for that, they will start construction on it. At this point, they are still looking a few months down the road for that to occur. He would like to get it approved and going as soon as possible because summer is going to be here before they know it.

Mr. Siegfert asked if this business will be participating in the DORA Program. Mr. Chlebina stated that it would. Mr. Ashton asked if there will be improved lighting near the sidewalk to help with public safety in the area. Mr. Chlebina stated that there is planned lighting on the side of the building for this. Mr. Siegfert stated that there was string lighting, as well, in the rendering that he saw.

Mr. Balthis stated that it is exciting about the additional opportunity for commerce Downtown. He asked what the length of commitment is for this permit agreement and if there is an exit plan if, at some point, they no longer want it and if the property would revert back to the City. Ms. Janet Ciotola, Law Director, stated that this permit agreement is for 25 years. It is revokable by either party at any time. Mr. Balthis asked if there is ability for the City to get out of the agreement if

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need be. Ms. Ciotola stated that it is a permit less the title, but it is for long term. It came to Council because of the length of time.

Mr. Pachta stated that he has been a resident of Cuyahoga Falls for 26 years. He has gotten to see Front Street transform to what it is today. Downtown gets busier and busier. It makes his stomach hurt on the Fridays and Saturdays when he has to turn people away because of the space. The new deck has occupancy for 38 seats, so this deck would be huge as far as revenue and, in the summer, for seating purposes.

Mr. Stams asked if with the increased parking downtown and additional parking with this project, they should maybe do something along the lines of developing more parking. He is concerned as to what the carbon footprint is on all this. Is it discouraging people from using public transportation.

Mr. Tom Sullivan, 447 Tallmadge Road, Cuyahoga Falls, stated that the Cashmere Cricket moved Downtown in 1982, and it was a vacant space then. It has been vacant for a long time. Even at the time when Front Street was completely vacant, Cashmere Cricket was at the first location and then moved to the second one. These people care about the area and they have stuck with the City when things were really lean. It is worth it to enter into this agreement and add a little magic to something that has been a blight on Front Street for at least 40 years.

Mr. Ashton moved to bring out Temp. Ord. A-31 with a favorable recommendation, second by Ms. Nichols-Rhodes. Motion passed (5-0).

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.