

City of Olmsted Falls
Minutes of a Council Work Session
Tuesday, January 15, 2019, at Olmsted Falls City Hall
26100 Bagley Road – Council Chambers, 7:00 p.m.

Council President Stibich called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll call was conducted. Councilmen Jim Haviland, Lori Jones (arrived at 7:05 p.m.), Ed Gorski, Denise Nicolay (arrived at 7:03 p.m.), Terry Duncan, and Lee Fenrich (arrived at 7:02 p.m.) were present.

Joint Recreation District Presentation

Mr. Stibich indicated that there are four residents present who have been researching a joint recreation district with the Township and School District. He introduced Donna Winter from the Olmsted Community Center, Gary Thompson, Brett Iafigliola and Gary Galauner.

Mr. Thompson presented a sample resolution which was a Squires, Sanders and Dempsey draft of September 29, 2003. This was the first possibility of a joint recreation district. The laws were passed in the Ohio Revised Code in 2001. He stated that himself, John Hawkins, Tim Atkinson and a few others from the Chamber of Commerce met at Matteo's to discuss how a recreation district or program could be put together between the Falls and Township. He does not believe this legislation was presented to the Falls or Township. This is not a new idea in the community. When he joined Council, the city had just purchased the property where the fire station is located and used some recreation money to purchase the property. At that time there was a study regarding building ball diamonds and a pool on this property.

Mr. Galauner indicated that there is a need for recreation. Schady Field is where soccer is played and half the time it is rained out and the fields are always muddy; baseball is inadequate and there is not a good place to play; flag football is played behind the middle school which is a swamp and a lot of mosquitos; so, there is no place to play. When we travel to other cities you can see the great complexes that they have.

Mr. Iafigliola stated that he met Mr. Galauner where their kids play basketball. He has three children as well and when he looks at recreation, he does not look at what is available for his children and the facilities that are lacking. There is a whole segment of the population that want to be healthy and some place to go to exercise and there is no great opportunity within our city. They put together concepts and ideas regarding how to resolve this issue within the community.

Donna Winter has been a part of the Community Center since it opened and began some programs for boys and girls. She is now the executive director of the center. She hoped in the first 10 years to get recreation located in one place. She has met with various superintendents and organizations in an attempt to get recreation located generally. Her goal is to get as much information regarding all the various programs out to the public through the center. Within the last 10 years almost all the organizations now use the community center for registrations. She stated that since the center only has one gym the basketball games are played in Berea and Middleburg Heights facilities, which takes families out of the city rather than bringing in families from other cities. Senior's are also looking for a place to go to keep healthy.

Mr. Thompson provided copies of the Ohio Revised Code that deals with a joint recreation district (see attached). He also provided sample resolutions for the city and township legislative bodies. He stated that at this time an example would be a board of seven (7) consisting of two representatives, this does not need to be council members but will need to be two appointees that Council can determine, or the board could consist of only five (5) members. The recreation district has to be formed by the Falls and the Township and does not have to include the school board, but it does make sense to have them a part of the district since they own most of the facilities in this community. The board creation is discussed in O.R.C. 755.14; section (B) and fits our purpose.

Mr. Thompson stated that the mission is to fill the needs of the entire demographic community. We are not just looking at the kids, although they are an important part, we are also looking at all demographics including seniors. He stated that he does not know the answer if the demographics of the city want to build a facility with a pool.

Mr. Galauner indicated that he knows the individual in Broadview Heights that runs the recreation department. Mr. Iafigliola indicated that Broadview Heights expanded their facilities to include a pool and basketball courts. Mr. Galauner stated that they spend \$15 million dollars on this project. Mr. Iafigliola indicated that the following cities have recreation centers: Seven Hills, Middleburg Heights, Berea, Strongsville, but we do not compare to these cities. The Township conducted a survey and the Falls developed a master plan and recreation keeps coming up as an issue. Ms. Jones asked if the Township would remain as the Township as there was previous discussions, due to financial constraints, that some of the area would be annexed. Mr. Thompson stated that the Township would not discuss a joint district until their operating levy was passed by the residents. Ms. Winter stated that during their steering committee recreation was a topic and how much residents would be willing to pay for a center. Mr. Thompson stated that their meeting with the Township representatives was positive.

Ms. Jones stated that if the center targets a certain percentage for senior use the city should be able to get community development block grant funds or money from the federal government to support a part of it because of the seniors.

Mr. Iafigliola indicated that both entities need to adopt identical legislation then the identity would be formed. The legislation will create the district and appoint the board body. The board would then determine what levies would be needed to build and operate. Mr. Fenrich asked what would happen if the levy to build was passed but the operating levy fails. Mr. Thompson indicated if that would be the case then the building would not be built. He stated that the levies cannot be combined and have to be two separate issues on the ballot.

Mr. Thompson stated that the ideal site is currently in litigation. Ms. Winter stated there will be different levels that we can take to the residents to determine what they are interested in. Our ultimate goal is a building, but this district could also take over the community league fields. The community league has funding but do not want to invest in fields that they do not have ownership over. She stated that the same is true for the soccer field, the soccer association does not own the field and are unwilling to invest the time and money into the field. There are more fields that need to be built because the community is losing the travel baseball program due to the fact that there are not enough fields to play on. She stated that there is land behind the Olmsted Falls fire department that could be developed under this district and operated by the district.

Mr. Thompson stated that district would be allowed to purchase or lease property, even from the school board. For example, when the soccer field is leased yearly the district could lease the property for longer periods of time and make improvements.

Mr. Iafigliola presented a conceptual building (see attached). Mr. Stibich stated that this building is based on the needs of the community. Mr. Thompson stated based on survey results that is correct.

Mr. Iafigliola stated that he is a professional engineer with a masters in finance. He stated that Example "B" is what he believes is being envisioned, a recreation building with courts, meeting rooms, etc. He stated that example "B" is the recreation center with fields but without a pool, at an approximate cost of \$9 million dollars. If this amount was based on a 10 year levy the amount would be \$61.00 per year per \$100,000 valuation. Ms. Nicolay asked what the Berea non-resident fees were. Ms. Winter stated that some centers charge a yearly fee for family or individual and then it is a per use fee for resident or non-resident. She stated that this district's hope is a per use fee so there would not be a membership for a family to join but rather pay as they use the center.

Mr. Iafigliola indicated that his drawing represents a recreation center of \$47,000 square feet. Level "A" would include improvement to fields and other areas that could be potential new fields and connection to the Metroparks. However, there is still a need to create this district just to improve fields. On a positive note we do as a community own land with fields but those fields are not in great shape and we need more of them. He stated that level "B" includes all of level "A." He stated that not long ago the city built a service garage which is not a lot different than what we are discussing with this building, a large empty space with offices. He stated that level "C" includes levels "A" and "B" plus a pool, again these costs do not include operations.

Ms. Nicolay asked if the recreation center built a pool would the Olmsted Falls swim/dive team hold their meets at the recreation center. Mr. Iafigliola indicated that the pool would be designed to accommodate that team. Mr. Stibich indicated that the Middleburg Heights pool is not fit for any type of competition it is only a recreational pool. Ms. Nicolay stated that Westlake's pool is phenomenal for competition. Mr. Haviland asked if there was a splash area as well. Ms. Nicolay stated that the pool runs off into a lazy river type area. Mr. Iafigliola indicated that there is no reason that a pool could not be added at a later date. The way the building is laid out in the preliminary drawing he does not feel that adding a pool would be an issue. Ms. Nicolay stated that her daughters were on the Olmsted Falls swim/dive team and the amount of money that she came in from the events was remarkable from concessions and 50/50 raffles. Mr. Stibich stated that one of the keys to make this work would be to get the school board on board and they are not going to be as excited about a recreation only pool versus a pool that would conducive to their students using it for competitions.

Mr. Stibich indicated that Level "B" and "C" include contingencies but level "A" does not. Mr. Iafigliola stated that the contingency is due to building costs.

Mr. Thompson indicated that the goal is to get this issue placed on the November, 2019 ballot. Ms. Duncan asked if there were any school issues that would be placed on the ballot. Ms. Jones indicated that there are renewals for the city that would be on the ballot. Ms. Jones asked if the building and operating levies would be placed on the November ballot. Mr. Thompson indicated that was the plan but is unsure if everything would be together in time. Mr. Gorski indicated that option "A" would only be an operating levy. Mr. Thompson indicated that was correct as no building is included in option "A." Mr. Stibich indicated that the first step is to get the legislation adopted through the city

and township which creates the district, the board would then need to be appointed and they would in turn work together to get everything needed for the ballot. Mr. Thompson indicated that there are two options, this is one, but as pointed out you would not create the trust without the assets. So, he is not sure that it would make sense to create the district if we are not going to place anything on the ballot. Mr. Stibich asked if seed money would be needed, for example, legal fees. Mr. Thompson stated that there are no outside costs to the legislation other than developing an agreement, and he believes that agreement can be accomplished with the legal departments of each entity. He stated that everyone he has talked to has asked about the costs for a survey to find out how palatable this is with the residents and second what the residents want in a facility and what they are willing to pay.

Mr. Thompson stated that he believes the lowest cost factor for a survey is a focus group of residents that would be conducted by a professional; the second part is completing some sort of survey and he believes the approximate cost for that would be \$5,000 to \$6,000, but has not received any quotes as of yet. Ms. Duncan stated that she would do the focus group and survey. Ms. Jones believes there is a desire for a recreation center, for example six people from her street alone belong to LifeWorks, three go to Strongsville and four go to Middleburg heights. Mr. Thompson replied yes, they are leaving the community and spending their money some place else. Mr. Gorski indicated that there are a couple of communities that work cooperatively with the city for use of their recreation facilities. Ms. Duncan replied Berea and Brook Park.

Mr. Stibich asked if Council would like to place the legislation on the agenda to run three readings and if need be table it. Council agreed. Ms. Duncan stated that she believes the 7th person needs to be clarified. Mr. Thompson stated that the board is not set in stone it is simply a draft. Ms. Winter stated that when she spoke with North Ridgeville they explained that they felt the need to bring in someone that was a specialist with the land and acquisitions. Ms. Duncan asked if this individual was paid. Mr. Thompson stated that per the ORC the board cannot be paid, the district could hire someone but that individual would not be part of the board. Mr. Stibich indicated that once the legislation is placed on the agenda it will bring this issue to the public's attention and we should receive feedback. Ms. Duncan indicated that we need to anticipate feedback. Mr. Thompson stated that there are one of two ways to complete this, one is to create the board and in turn they would do the work, or, we can continue to put things together do the survey's and everything else and then put the information forward. Ms. Duncan asked if the township or school board have individuals in mind that would serve on this board. Mr. Thompson replied that he does not. Ms. Winter stated that there were several steering committee meetings and recreation was discussed every time we met.

Mr. Gorski indicated that as more of a cautious approach it may make more sense to prepare the legislation to go onto Council's agenda for the first meeting of February to ensure that we have the township on board with moving forward with the district. Mr. Fenrich indicated that it sounds like everyone is waiting for the other person to make the first move and if Council takes the first step he believes the township will follow. Mr. Iafigliola stated that to his impression is that the township is fully supportive but it was important to them to have the school board involved. We then went to the school board and somewhat surprisingly they did not take a strong position either way and they asked that we put in writing the reasons they should be on the board. We will be addressing that issue but, in his opinion, we talked about a seven-member board but if the school board was not involved then the board could consist of five members. There are some advantages to have the school board involved but if they choose not to it does provide a little bit easier working relationship.

Mr. Haviland indicated that when this issue was being investigated did anyone determine what the fatal flaw was that prevented this issue from moving forward in the past? Mr. Thompson replied that it was either City Council or the Township Trustees that did not work together. Ms. Winter stated that this comes down to making decisions that are best for the community. In previous years she has been involved with the Renaissance regarding a pool; we had conversations with the YMCA and if the YMCA was interest in the Falls then the Township was not interest, if they are interested in the Township then the Falls backs away. This would create an entity that looks at the community.

Mr. Gorski stated that this is not something that we are creating from the ground level, we have an existing structure that we are playing into in order to create something for both communities. Ms. Duncan stated that she believes that is really important because the properties are everywhere not just the city. She stated that this facility needs to be put where it would make more sense. Mr. Stibich stated that everyone will get use of the facility. Ms. Winter the other value is residents are leaving our community in order to attend their children's games.

Ms. Duncan stated that she feels it is important that the school board is involved because most of the people who move to this community do so because of the schools, so the school board has to be on board with this, one way or the either, if not as a full-fledged partner than at least as supporting the project.

Mr. Thompson stated that the schools have indicated that they have no athletic programming for children under 7th grade, so they have nothing for the younger students that is an athletic program. He stated that they have asked the school board what property they would be willing to permit another entity to maintain and they indicated that they want to keep control over the varsity fields, which makes sense. Beyond that, the school board was open to allowing another entity to improve their various other properties.

Mr. Iafigliola asked Council what they would like him to tell others that ask about tonight's meeting. Mr. Gorski replied that the city is willing to make the first move. Mr. Stibich replied that Council is in favor. Mr. Iafigliola asked for Council to put together a list of any further questions they may have so we can investigate the questions and answer them intelligently the next time there is a discussion. Also, you may have heard about the North Olmsted recreation facility placing an operating levy on the ballot that failed. There are two important things that were written in an article and, first of all they were asking for \$44 million dollars over 30 years, so not only it is a huge pot of money but it is over a long period of time which brought the cost to \$127 a year per \$100,000. North Olmsted has a huge recreation center where the swim team practices and they were not trying to build a recreation center but rather expand an already existing huge center. This particular article says that a councilman played a key role in defeating the levy but what he actually says in the article isn't that he is opposed to the idea but rather that he would like to take the \$44.8 million-dollar levy, because he thought that was too much, and reduce it to a more reasonable \$18.5 million-dollar levy. So, in his mind here is a councilman saying that he believes the recreation center is biting off too much and the amount should be brought down to a more reasonable levy.

Ms. Duncan stated that it truly is going to be the residents who pay for this because the city does not have the businesses to pay for it. Ms. Winter replied that that we know the residents want it but now it will be the opportunity to place in front of them and find out if they want to pay for it.

Miscellaneous – Mr. Fenrich stated that on Sunday morning he met with entire group of residents regarding the Baker’s Creek bridge. He explained to them that there is a proposal to place legislation on the agenda to close the access path and once adopted the road would be closed 60 days later. He informed the residents that they need to meet on their own and elect a spokesperson for the group. He also explained that the Northwood residents are beginning to get upset as they do not see an end in sight for this issue and that the East River residents are assuming that this access path will be the utilized forever to get in and out of their properties and that cannot happen. He stated that the residents kept attempting to discuss the access path and he informed them that the path was not the discussion but rather the bridge. He showed them the newspaper article which shows that this has been an issue since 1969 so 50 years and he informed them that a decision needs to be made. He informed the residents need to agree and present a list of people who will be assessed for the bridge to Council. This information will then be presented to the law director in order for him to present a final document for the residents to sign. Once the document is signed the city will then gravel the access path and inform the Northwood residents when the bridge will be replaced and the access path closed.

Adjournment

Ms. Duncan moved to **adjourn**; Mr. Fenrich **seconded**. Poll: 7 ayes; 0 nays. **Motion carried**.

The meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Paul Stibich, Council President

Angela Mancini, Clerk of Council