

**Dublin City Council  
Public Services Committee**

Tuesday, September 19, 2023

5:00 p.m.

5555 Perimeter Drive

Council Chamber

Meeting Minutes

Ms. Kramb called the September 19, 2023 Public Services Committee meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Vice Mayor De Rosa, Mr. Reiner, and Ms. Kramb (Chair)

**Staff Present:** Ms. Goliver, Mr. Ranc, Ms. LeRoy

**Approval of Minutes**

Vice Mayor De Rosa moved to approve the minutes of the May 16, 2023 Public Services Committee meeting. Mr. Reiner seconded the motion.

Vote on the motion: Ms. Kramb, yes; Mr. Reiner, yes; Vice Mayor De Rosa, yes.

**Discussion Items:**

Holiday Market Follow-Up

Mr. Ranc opened by providing a background on holiday markets. May 9, 2022 City Council directed staff to conduct a feasibility study to explore holiday markets domestically and internationally. Staff has conducted Phase 1 of a feasibility study, which was exploratory in nature. December 2022, two members of City Council and two members of staff traveled to Germany and Austria to research holiday markets. In addition, staff traveled domestically (Pennsylvania and Indiana) to study holiday markets. The recommendation from staff at that time was to draft and issue a request for proposals (RFP) to conduct Phase 2 of a feasibility study. The Public Services Committee directed staff to meet with potential community partners to gauge interest before proceeding with Phase 2 of the feasibility study.

Events staff met with the Downtown Dublin Strategic Alliance, which includes representatives from Visit Dublin Ohio, Crawford Hoying, Dublin Arts Council and the Historic Dublin Business Association. The City Manager followed up with one-on-one conversations with leadership from Visit Dublin Ohio, Crawford Hoying and the Dublin Arts Council. Each organization expressed interest and offered conceptual support for such an event. Staff determined that they need more detailed information in order to have more productive conversations around potential partnerships. Staff has also had the opportunity to meet with directors of holiday markets. Each member of the

Committee met with Maria Murphy, the CEO of the Carmel Christkindlemarkt\* to learn more information regarding Carmel's market, including the following:

- Market background and operating model;
- Revenue structure, sponsorships, and potential vendors;
- Initial thoughts on the potential for a market in Dublin.

*\*Clerk's Note: Subsequent to the meeting, Ms. Murphy has indicated that she is operating as CEO of Marketplace Consulting.*

Staff has also engaged in discussions with the owner of German American Marketing, Inc. that operates holiday markets in Philadelphia and Baltimore. Those conversations were key to help staff understand what should be in an RFP.

Staff recommended to proceed with Phase 2 of an RFP. Staff has recommended the scope for a potential RFP. Staff learned that the City of Carmel does not run the market. That is done by a separate non-profit organization. The City was the catalyst but does not operate it. They are involved from a logistics perspective and have been from the beginning building, maintaining and storing the huts, providing utilities, etc. The goal is to understand the best ownership and operating model for Dublin. Staff is suggesting something similar to what was done when a Performing Arts Center was being considered: a five-year pro forma to show all various costs and realistic revenue from someone that is experienced. We also want to know explicitly, what the City's participation would look like, that would include recommendations for sponsorship models. Dublin has experience with sponsorships with the Dublin Irish Festival but there are many different models. Staff would want an analysis and recommendations for event location. The emphasis would be on where in the City would best drive fundraising and sponsorship revenue. It would be helpful to have a high-level sketch showing what would fit and how it would work. Staff is seeking input and to answer any questions. Staff recommends a Public Services Committee recommendation to City Council to proceed with an RFP. The estimated cost is \$30,000. We have the necessary funds, and if this moves forward, the funding would come back in a Q4 supplemental appropriation.

Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that during the City Council retreat when members visited Carmel, IN and Franklin, TN, she had a 2+ hour meeting with Ms. Murphy then and spoke about set up, model, size, economics, etc. When Ms. Murphy visited Dublin this summer, she spent a fair bit of time looking at what would be unique about the Dublin market. She was able to assess whether the community itself has the raw materials for a successful market. They met the morning after the festival to walk the farmers market. It was useful for her to get a sense of the community, vendors, etc. They spoke about start-up costs, how to build the huts, and with limited involvement from the City, how would you pay for the huts being built. Ms. Murphy shared three models:

1. The City builds the huts,
2. Get a sponsor,
3. Charge vendors a percentage of commission.



To help pay for the hut, the City will take a larger commission until the hut is paid for. Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that she learned a lot about what questions to ask. City Council's Goal #4 is to develop a regional and local events program and this could be a good example of whether that is feasible.

Mr. Reiner stated that he is curious about the organization that runs the Baltimore and Philadelphia markets and if they would be involved with Dublin. Mr. Ranc stated staff is speaking to everyone in order to learn as much as possible. If, after the RFP, we decide to do a public/private partnership where a private company runs the market, German American, Inc. would be a company with whom we would speak. The first step is to decide which model we are comfortable using to run the market. Domestically, this is a small niche. That company is one that would be considered if the market were to be organized that way.

Mr. Reiner stated that he would like to understand how much City revenue goes into hiring a company. Mr. Ranc stated that the only involvement of the City of Philadelphia and Baltimore is that they permit the event.

Mr. Reiner stated he is interested in finding the participants. Mr. Ranc stated that we could get the right vendors. Ms. Murphy shared a list of potential vendors. The purpose of this report would be to give us the guide for how to do this.

Mr. Reiner stated that there are companies that will come in here and manage this or tell us how to manage it. Evidently, financially it is not a giant cost flow out if the company that does Baltimore and Philadelphia does this.

Ms. Kramb stated that we need the next phase to get answers. She thinks staff is asking the right questions. She would like to see that it not be restricted to a German market, but it be a holiday market. The potential exists to capture other cultural events. Her suggestion is to not make the RFP so specific that it be limited to German only. She asked if the feasibility study could be paid for out of bed tax funds since that is what this would be supporting. Mr. Ranc stated that staff will follow-up with the Finance Director and get an answer to that.

Ms. Kramb stated that she does not think she wants the City to own and operate this but possibly hand this feasibility study over to someone else. If there is a way to use bed tax money, that would be great.

Vice Mayor De Rosa stated staff is working toward Council's vision goals. Local events (Independence Day, St. Patrick's Day, etc.) are where the primary market is the residents. Regional events could include the Dublin Irish Festival and a Holiday Market. The plan was to work on a program roadmap. These same elements being discovered with this, would be the same things needed for future regional events. Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that she will keep pushing for activity in Riverside Crossing Park. The second part of the goal says, "...to leverage Dublin parks and facilities to create a connected, comprehensive and fiscally sustainable vision that drives vitality, engagement and entertainment." This RFP can help facilitate discussion.

Mr. Ranc stated that staff is finishing putting finishing touches on an RFP on the overarching goal. It will look similar to this, focusing on regional signature events. The other aspect to consider with this feasibility study is looking at this as an opportunity to start from scratch with an event. We have a phenomenal staff that puts on great events. When running something as substantial as the Dublin Irish Festival from its inception, changing that would be a big ship to turn. This could be set up in a different way using a different model. One can help inform the other.

Ms. Kramb stated if this RFP is written correctly, it could be used for other events. It is giving us funding models and options for running an event. She thinks that is key. She suggested staff consider how muddy the grass area will be at Christmastime. Seasonality and location will go together. If the RFP is broad enough to be used for other events, that is a good use of funding.

Mr. Reiner asked if the international market in Columbus still exists. Ms. LeRoy stated that the last year of that festival was 2018. Dublin had a staff member that sat on that board. Mr. Reiner stated that it was a fun event with great variety of food and wares. He mentioned the Obon festival while in Japan and it broke the ice. These things are very important. It showed our connection with them at a higher level. It influences foreign affairs and cash flow back to the City. Other communities were stunned because Dublin dominated the conversation immediately.

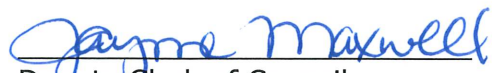
Ms. Kramb moved to recommend to Council a Request for Proposal for Phase 2 of a feasibility study for a potential holiday market in Dublin. Mr. Reiner seconded.

Vote on the motion: Ms. Kramb, yes; Mr. Reiner, yes; Vice Mayor De Rosa, yes.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.



Chair, Public Services Committee



Deputy Clerk of Council