

**Dublin City Council  
Public Services Committee**

Wednesday, October 13, 2021 – 5:30 p.m.  
5555 Perimeter Drive  
Council Chamber

Meeting Minutes

Ms. Fox called the October 13, 2021 Public Services Committee meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Present: Mr. Reiner, Ms. Fox (Chair), Vice Mayor De Rosa.

Staff present: Mr. Ranc, Mr. Plouck, Mr. Earman, Mr. Stanford, Mr. Hammersmith, Mr. Anderson

**Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Reiner moved to approve the minutes of the September 15, 2021 Public Services Committee meeting.

Vice Mayor De Rosa seconded the motion.

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

**Discussion Items:**

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Mr. Earman shared the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update with the Committee. This was referred to the Public Services Committee in March and was referred then to the Community Services Advisory Commission. He outlined the meeting objectives as:

Provide an overview of the CSAC process;

Review CSAC's recommendation,

Review recommended key components,

Invite discussion and input from PSC to determine a recommendation, next steps

Review Process & Recommendation

Three meetings were held covering each chapter of the Master Plan and all action steps with a recommendation coming out of the September 14 meeting.

CSAC suggested sixteen areas for consideration. There were very interested in recognizing the accomplishments of former plan. Public Engagement was a big component and included the following: public forums, community surveys,

stakeholder interviews, focus groups. They also gathered data through conducting a trends analysis and benchmark analysis. The Commission also believes the following is necessary for a comprehensive review: a natural resources analysis, historical and cultural assessment, demographic analysis, equity mapping, program assessments, park amenity and facility assessment, DEI assessment, climate change assessment, current conditions and mitigation strategies, overall community needs assessment

Mr. Earman stated that CSAC has recommended all of the above areas be included in plan. This would require a consultant. A consultant will not make decisions but will provide Staff with information allowing us to make decisions as a community.

Mr. Reiner asked how Staff felt about the recommended areas of consideration. Mr. Earman stated that Staff provided input when working with the Commission. He shared that Mr. Ranc has experience with these and they feel this is a pretty comprehensive list. There are subtitles that could go with items on this list and could provide more detail. This covers everything from staff perspective.

Mr. Reiner asked about the timeline. Mr. Earman stated that they intend to solicit RFPs this year. Typically a plan of this size and scope would have a cost estimate of \$175,000 and could be completed over the course of a year if it stays on track and we are aggressive. Mr. Ranc stated that the idea is if this is in the operating budget for 2022, Staff could get ahead of the game and go through the selection process yet this year, and be in a position to hit the ground running at the beginning of the year spending 2022 focusing on this.

Vice Mayor De Rosa asked about the lifespan of the plan. Mr. Earman stated that he would recommend a five-year plan. The last one was a ten-year plan. Society and technology is changing and he feels it would be overstepping to go beyond a ten-year plan. Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that some of these (like climate change) may be farther reaching. She asked about benchmarking. Mr. Earman stated that they benchmark against municipalities of like size and with like amenities and demographics (Westerville; Carmel, Indiana; some in Texas). Vice Mayor De Rosa thanked Staff for providing other plans. They were good models. She asked if park programming is part of this conversation. Mr. Earman answered in the affirmative and stated that we do program parks and are looking at general park use policy; i.e., if Riverside Crossing were to open today, we would get a lot of requests for use to that. The City would need to have a policy in place to state what kind of event can go on there, how to manage costs, etc. Vice Mayor De Rosa asked if that is a separate project. Mr. Earman stated that it would be included. Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that may be one of the most interesting questions moving forward. She thinks this is a great plan and is okay

with it advancing. Mr. Reiner asked if Staff need a recommendation from the committee. Mr. Earman stated that they would like the Committee to make a recommendation to City Council to approve the update as planned. Council would review and weigh in on areas of interest and then Council would approve.

Mr. Reiner referenced Riverside Crossing Park, and shared that in Milwaukee, there is a park that had entertainment all of the time. Riverside Crossing Park could become the place where there is always something happening in downtown Dublin. He just went to the Arlington Art Festival and thinks it would be cool to see Bridge Park become an event center. There is a fair amount of living units close to it.

Ms. Fox asked for any objectives in the short term and if there was anything immediate remaining from the existing plan. Mr. Earman stated that they need to focus on athletic field space. That is coming to a bottleneck. Pickle ball is a very hot topic. Lack of space is a hot topic. That will be in the needs assessment. Mr. Earman stated that the City needs to make sure all voices are heard. Going into that too rapidly makes him nervous. Ms. Fox asked about land acquisition and if they should we be thinking hard about it. Mr. Earman stated that Staff is visiting that topic relatively quickly. Land acquisition is tricky and needs to happen strategically.

Mr. Reiner asked if there are grants for parks, sports fields, etc. Mr. Earman stated that most grants are for land preservation, waterways, etc. He added that underprivileged neighborhoods are more likely to get a grant for sports fields. Dublin typically does not qualify for those grants because of the funding available here.

Ms. Fox stated that this is very comprehensive. She agreed with utilizing a consultant. She stated that she would like to add some of the ideas coming out of 2035. Really fascinatingly fun cities have festivals. She offered for consideration who will be generator of those. It takes staff. Partnering could be more successful. Ms. Fox shared the idea of a cultural arts center now as the trend is that these centers have so much energy in them and not just art. She asked about including questions into a general survey. Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that there are so many questions that have to be asked, you many not get the richness that we're seeking.

Ms. Fox stated that she does not want benchmark off of Westerville because she feels Dublin is already are heads and tails above anyone in the area. She stated that in choosing a firm, there are firms that really look outside the box and she would encourage Staff to broaden their thought about who is hired. Mr. Ranc stated that this will be the third parks master plan he has been a part of. He

agreed about getting the right person on board. He stated that this is an instance where you get what you pay for which is why the budget is where it is.

Mr. Ranc stated that these surveys really dig into parks specifics. They will make sure this marries to the 2035 framework. They also do not want to have the community confused. Mr. Reiner stated this will be the elite best plan. He stated that they want the most clever firm. Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that there are some innovative things going on. She asked if there are some dollars budgeted to go and see different things/examples. She added that because of video capabilities, there is no reason they can't bring examples in. She stated that Rotterdam in the Netherlands is doing some wonderfully interesting things. Mr. Earman stated that they did not include travel in the budget. This is just for the consultant.

Mr. Reiner asked who controls the bridge. Mr. Earman stated that the City has purposefully not engaged in ideas for using the bridge for activities because it blocks traffic and is a very difficult thing to block. Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that she saw a photo shoot happening on the bridge so activities are happening there.

The Committee agreed to recommend the project move forward to Council for further discussion.

#### Water and Sanitary Sewer Extension Update

Mr. Stanford stated that the water and sewer extension discussion was referred to this Committee by Council, it was discussed at the August 23, 2021 meeting, and they are back to provide an update. He shared that Staff's intent is to bring this back in early 2022 upon completion of the household sewage treatment system (HSTS) risk assessment.

Mr. Stanford reviewed a list of questions posed by the Committee and shared Staff responses.

- The Committee requested an updated presentation that included the cost of connection to homeowners. This was provided through BoardPaq on August 24, 2021.
- The Committee requested inclusion of typical costs of construction and connection to homeowners. This was included in communications with residents in the upcoming Area 1B sanitary sewer extension project area. They are very well informed about what their costs will be.
- The Committee previously requested information regarding the number of people interested in connecting to upcoming utility extension projects. Staff

surveyed residents in Area 1B. 23 letters were sent and 18 responses were received. Of the 18 responses received, 13 indicate intent to connect (72% of received); 1 indicated the intent to connect within five years; 3 indicated that they did not intend to connect;

- The Committee requested information on actual connections to completed projects. Mr. Stanford displayed a chart showing the number of potential connections, the number of connections, and the connection rate (percentage).

Mr. Reiner asked how these areas fit with actual piping in place. Mr. Stanford stated that this represents properties where the lines are in place. Ones not connected today could connect tomorrow because the service line is there. Mr. Reiner asked if this is a systematic connection. Mr. Hammersmith stated that these areas were laid out to have complete service. There was either a sewer lateral or water service run to the right of way. There is a complete system available for those property owners to use. These are completed, finished projects. Mr. Hammersmith stated that the concern is running pipe to people that do not want to connect. Mr. Ranc explained that water lines cannot be run that are not going to be used because they must be pressurized. Staff is coming here to look into potential alternatives and phasing and sequencing to get people to connect. Mr. Ranc stated that they are looking at developing ways of incentivizing people to connect and Staff is looking for the Committee's recommendation on how to move forward.

Mr. Reiner asked if the City would want some real commitment before moving forward. Mr. Hammersmith stated that with regards to water lines, there has to be commitment before the pipe is installed.

Mr. Stanford highlighted that the two-year fee waiver has expired for Projects 11A and 11B.

Mr. Stanford shared an analysis of completed projects over time since 2017 for both sanitary sewer and for water.

In response to a prior request from the Committee for an updated health risk assessment of the HSTS, Mr. Stanford stated that Staff has reached out Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District as well as Franklin County Public Health. They will begin that assessment in late 2021/early 2022 and will have it back to Dublin in the first quarter of 2022.

Mr. Stanford stated that the Committee requested public construction costs of extension projects per household, per business, and per parcel. He provided a

chart showing detailed costs analysis. The shaded rows have actual cost data and the rest are estimates.

Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that this cost per parcel assumes 100% connecting. At the current adoption rates, these costs are significantly more than what is listed. This chart needs a column at current adoption rates. Mr. Stanford stated that they also provided average cost per house, business, or parcel. He stated that there is a range of actual cost from approximately \$54,000 to \$64,000 per home. There are more vacant parcels than

Vice Mayor De Rosa asked what Dublin's current connection cost is. Mr. Hammersmith stated that it is around \$3,000 for Dublin's piece. Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that it would be good to include that and Columbus' costs along with anything additional that the homeowner would have. The math then is so simple. You would have to go back and reimburse people that have already paid. This makes this conversation easier from a taxpayer perspective. The City is saving \$100,000 rather than giving away \$20,000.

Mr. Reiner asked how many of the vacant parcels will develop and noted that those drive up the cost.

Ms. Fox stated that the objective is connections. Adding the incentives discussed to this chart will be helpful. She referenced the letters sent out and asked if Staff received information on why people want to connect or why not. Mr. Stanford stated that none indicated why they would like to connect. One resident indicated that they did not want to connect because their existing system had been checked and was in good working order. Ms. Fox stated that if Staff developed a letter with multiple-choice questions, they may get more rich data and could help market this.

In response to Mr. Reiner's question, Mr. Stanford reiterated that the HSTS assessment will start late this year and Staff will have that back early next year. Mr. Reiner stated that information will help him make a decision.

Mr. Stanford continued with financing/funding options.

- State of Ohio Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Grant Program provides \$250 million for projects in Ohio. Each community was able to provide applications for funding. Dublin has submitted nine projects for consideration. Area 1B was included in the submissions. If grant funding is received, that will free up additional funds for these unserved areas. Household connection is eligible for reimbursement. In response to Ms. Fox's question, Mr. Stanford stated that this is brand new this year. It is tied to Covid relief funds. The Ohio Department of Development delegated counties

to come up with their list of top 10 priorities within the county. That is part of the scoring criteria. Almost all of Dublin's projects were in Franklin County. The guidance Staff received was to pick the county where there was the most work.

- Water Pollution Control Fund through Ohio EPA that is a revolving fund designed to create low-interest rate loans and other forms of assistance. It is administered by the Ohio EPA Division of Environmental Financial Assistance and they create a project for every listing each year in late summer. Staff will continue to explore available funds. Summer of 2022 is when we will have the next availability to apply. They can offer low interest rate loans to homeowners to repair/replacement for homes with failing systems. This is tied to Franklin County Department of Public Health. The only people that can apply are individual county health departments. In 2021, Franklin County did submit and were awarded a loan. Those are all low-interest loans. Staff will continue to investigate.
- Other Funding Opportunities:
  1. Waiver of all City of Dublin Connection Fees (currently 50% for first two years);
  2. Extension of fee waiver time period (currently two years from completion of project);
  3. Potential low interest loans for homeowners for their connection costs (complicated but does exist in other areas);
  4. Establishment of a special improvement district.

Mr. Stanford closed by stating that Staff intends to return in early 2022 with results of Risk Assessment. Once Staff has that, they would like to finalize discussions and receive recommendation from the Committee and Council on the policy and any new prioritizations.

Mr. Reiner asked if sewer is at road grade and if that is why a lift station is necessary. Mr. Hammersmith stated that lift stations are designed to collect low-lying areas along the river.

Vice Mayor De Rosa asked how much of this is in the 2022 CIP. Mr. Hammersmith stated that a lot of these projects were deferred until they had this discussion.

Vice Mayor De Rosa asked if it is feasible to have a discussion with Columbus regarding their relative fees. If Dublin decides that it makes good sense for Dublin to waive their own fees but it is still the lesser of the fees. Mr. Hammersmith stated that he can have that conversation but a good share if that is built in plant capacity. He stated that Staff is going to revisit our capacity fees because they have not increased in six years but the water rates have changed.

Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that Dublin could waive their fees and find that it didn't do anything because the bigger portion is still there. We are trying to remove the barriers. Mr. Ranc stated that Staff want to get the Committee all the information needed and ideas beyond the obvious funding solutions. Vice Mayor De Rosa asked what the real costs for Columbus are versus their "fees".

Ms. Fox referenced 4B and 4C, and stated that the cost per home would be \$146,000 if everyone would have connected, instead, it was \$252,000 per house. She stated that the costs have to be affordable in a variety of ways/offer a variety of incentives. She stated that we have to market the health aspect. It might be easier to sell with grants and a variety of incentives. Homeowners may be encouraged to connect if they know someone is going to examine their sewer system every three years. If there is a policy for inspections, it might be another motivator. Ms. Fox suggested waivers of 100% in the first year, 85% the following year to incentivize earlier connection. She also suggested an assessment on taxes.

Mr. Reiner asked about zoning for areas putting in septic systems. Mr. Hammersmith stated that it is based on soil type, acreage, bedrooms, lot size, and area needed to install the system. It is now a mound drip system. Septic tank and leach is not permitted. That requires a large footprint and a secondary location on site as well. Mr. Reiner asked if that affected vacant lots. Mr. Hammersmith answered affirmatively stating that it would make it difficult.

Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that this is a hard problem and she appreciates the analysis and all the work.

Ms. Fox asked if failed septic systems can be replaced in the same place. Mr. Hammersmith stated that a tank can the larger problem is if a leach field fails. Ms. Fox stated that she would like to provide cost comparisons including what an average cost to replace a septic system. She suggested a marketing pamphlet.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

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Deputy Clerk of Council