

**Dublin City Council
Public Services Committee**

Tuesday, March 22, 2022 – 5:00 p.m.
5200 Emerald Parkway
Development Building, Large Conference Room

Meeting Minutes

Ms. Kramb called the March 22, 2022 Public Services Committee meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

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

Staff present: Ms. Goliver, Mr. Earman, Mr. Stanford, Mr. Hammersmith, Mr. Ranc

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Kramb moved to approve the minutes of the February 16, 2022 Public Services Committee meeting.

Vice Mayor De Rosa seconded the motion.

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

Discussion Items:

Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update

Mr. Earman provided an overview of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update. He noted that a request for proposals was solicited in late 2021 and Staff received 3 proposals. There was a stiff set of criteria by which proposals were evaluated including qualifications, understanding the schedule, compensation, references, and capacity. Mr. Earman stated that he and Mr. Ranc both have had bad experiences with Park and Recreation Master Plans. The firm selected was PROS Consulting. They have extensive experience and have done local and regional projects including Westerville, Upper Arlington, Carmel, Indiana and Durango, Colorado. They come with an experienced team and also with a very well-known survey team that will be conducting a statistically valid survey as well as a resident survey online. The Master Plan will maximize community engagements, use a wide variety of data sources, determine unique levels of service standards, shape financials, develop a realistic action plan, and create a clear set of objectives. It will be a very action-oriented plan. Mr. Earman reviewed project milestones as divided into 5 Tasks.

1. Project Management, Progress Reporting and Data Review. There is a kick-off meeting scheduled for Friday with Staff and the consultant. PROS

will be reporting monthly if not more frequently. They will prepare a database of stakeholders.

2. Community Profile and Public Engagement. There will be internal conversations with interviews of specific groups. This task will include the first internal workshop. Mr. Earman assured the Committee that there will be no public forum workshop without bringing forward to Council anything Staff intends to bring to the public. They intend to hold a public forum in May. Community surveys will be available April through July. This is not a targeted sample range but a crowd-sourcing website that the public has access to. There will be another internal workshop in July to go over the results of the survey.

Mr. Ranc clarified that there will be a public survey but also a statistically valid survey conducted by ETC Institute making sure all demographics are covered. Ms. Kramb asked if the general survey will be limited to Dublin residents because there are a lot of school district residents with interest in parks and recreation. Mr. Earman stated that it will not be limited but will be advertised to residents. Mr. Ranc stated that gathering that information can be made part of the survey. Ms. Kramb suggested some effort be made to identify residency. Vice Mayor De Rosa asked about the timing of the general survey and the resident survey being done by CPI. Mr. Ranc stated that Staff will make sure that is coordinated with CPI. Mr. Earman stated that they want to focus specifically on satisfaction with what we have and future needs.

3. Parks, Facilities and Programs Analysis. This task includes inventory and assessment, park classification and level of service standards, etc. This task also includes an internal workshop to cover key technical findings.

Ms. Kramb stated that the City has some of this information and confirmed that these are things the consultants will use. Mr. Ranc stated that they will be sharing the data that the City currently has as part of the first task. The consultants will be using work that has been done as well identifying additional work that needs to be done in terms of data gathering.

4. Operational and Financial Plan. This task will analyze current maintenance and operations, assess the department's financial situation, and develop funding and revenue strategies. There will be additional internal and external workshops.
5. Implementation and Master Plan Development. This final task will include the development of vision, mission, and goals/objectives. It will also include a short and long term strategic action plan, plan briefings and final master plan preparation. There will be a presentation to Council. Staff is aiming for January 23, 2023.

Mr. Earman shared an estimated timeline associated with each task.

Mr. Reiner stated that we do not want to benchmark with neighboring communities. The mission is to have a cool parks system that draws in 20-25-

year-olds to work here. He would like to see the direction go toward drawing middle youth to Dublin. There are no mountains but there is a lot of green space. His interest is in designing parks that wow. The direction is to create natural amenities that draw people in. There has been discussion about having a climbing wall down on the steep wall of the bridge and it never gets traction. This is the kind of thing that draws young people. The kind of people we are pursuing are looking for dynamic adventurous parks. Mr. Earman stated that he has had a very similar conversation with Mr. Ranc about the scope of this plan. They also want to see what other communities are not doing that we can do that will draw people here. How do we use our parks system to be an economic generator? PROS is going to focus on trends out there and how to use parks as a leverage point to lift us above the rest. Mr. Reiner stated that the big thing with Bridge Street was the doubt that we can't draw the young people up here. The next move is to draw them in; create the coolest place across the country. He stated that Dublin needs to be Number 1.

Vice Mayor De Rosa echoed Mr. Reiner's comments. She stated that there is a comparison set and a benchmark set. If these consultants have done 300 master plans, then we need to see the 75 coolest things they have seen and use those as our benchmark. She likes parks as an economic generator. She posed the question, "How do we work in our parks?" There is a big drive to work in parks. The consultant should be able to bring us big ideas. She stated that we could also leave the United States for creative ideas. She suggested Staff look at Rotterdam in the Netherlands and Cardiff in Wales. She does not want to limit Dublin to what neighboring communities are doing. She asked if Staff has worked with this company before. Mr. Earman stated that he has worked with them at the Ohio Parks Department.

Mr. Reiner stated that Dublin has to upgrade canoeing and kayaking since we have a river. Each sector of the City has to be exceptional. Mr. Earman shared that Staff is in final execution with a company that will start the kayaking this spring. Mr. Reiner stated that people want to live in a place where it is adventurous and fun and challenging. Mr. Ranc stated that these points are well taken. Timing is important. The point about benchmarking versus comparison is a great one. It is helpful to give ourselves some basis for where we are in the region and to look outside that for aspiration. He stated that it is great to have aspirational leaders. Vice Mayor De Rosa agreed. She stated that the largest continental park is in Berlin, Germany and what they have done with that park is fantastic. These parks have to be seen and felt. Mr. Reiner stated that he does not want Dublin to be provincial. He has no qualms about sending staff to Europe.

Ms. Krumb asked about costs. Mr. Earman stated that they came in within budget. Ms. Krumb asked how many hours they estimate providing and if they break it down by task. Mr. Ranc stated that they broke it down by days but Staff

can get back to the Committee with those details because that is how we will be billed. Ms. Kramb stated that she really wants a product and vision and is curious about how it is broken down. Mr. Ranc stated that Staff can share the proposal. Staff did tell PROS that we are not going to be an easy client. Ms. Kramb stated that she would spend more time on the creative ideas and implementation than the idea gathering piece. Mr. Ranc is confident in their ability to do this and will monitor them to make sure they deliver. Mr. Reiner stated that Dublin needs to set the standard and then people get on board. He asked how other contractors will work with these consultants. Mr. Earman stated that PROS will provide construction estimates and timeframes; they will not be designing anything for us. Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that providing ideas/suggestions is often easier for respondents than a blank page. Ms. Kramb stated that we are looking for activities and leading questions. Mr. Earman stated that Staff will present to the Community Services Advisory Committee at their next meeting on April 12th and then report back to the Committee.

Utility Extension Update

Mr. Hammersmith introduced the Utility Extension Policy Update. This was last before the Committee October 13, 2021. Staff will go through the health risk assessment and some considerations for changes to the policy.

Mr. Stanford stated that this is the third time this item has come before the Committee. Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District and Franklin County Public Health recently completed a Household Sewage Treatment System (HSTS) health risk assessment (HRA). Mr. Stanford shared updated sewer and water connection data. He stated that they track this tightly to see success through connection rates. They already have two permits for Area 1C. They have a good connection rate overall. One thing skewing the number is brand new property. There will be more connections to bring up that rate. Mr. Stanford stated that overall the HRA found that all systems are operating properly. The score is comprised of a few different factors such as soil type, proximity to streams/river, age and type of system, and ground water pollution potential. There were some nuisance issues identified in existing systems but nothing major. There were two pockets of heightened risk scores:

1. Between Riverside Drive and the Scioto River, from Emerald Parkway to the Delaware County line; and
2. Between Dublin Road and the Scioto River, south of Tuttle Road and Hayden Run Road.

Mr. Stanford shared an updated health risk assessment map.

Mr. Stanford offered 5 options for the Committee to consider:

1. Consider suspension of the policy due to lack of connections. Staff recommends continuing the policy to address existing health and safety issues.

2. Consider re-prioritization of utility extension projects.
 - a. Prioritize by highest health risk;
 - b. Prioritize by project cost per number of home connections made possible; or
 - c. Prioritize by total number of existing homes that can be served in an area.

Mr. Reiner stated that he is in favor of reprioritizing by health risk.

Vice Mayor De Rosa asked how they were they prioritized before. Mr.

Hammersmith stated that it was done by health risk. The assessment was to see if any of those areas have changed at all.

Mr. Stanford stated that Staff wanted to see systems that were close to failure. We know that if a system fails, that customer is lost at that point due to cost.

3. Consider reinstating the connection mandate. This would have a negative response and mandates financial requirements for affected property owners.

Mr. Reiner stated that solving this is a good thing but since there is no real health risk established, we are in good shape. He stated that the government should not be forcing people to connect. Ms. Krumb stated that people cannot afford to do it.

4. Consider waiving 100% of City capacity fee rather than 50%. This creates the question of whether homeowners who already connected via the policy should be refunded the 50% capacity fee.

Mr. Reiner asked about fees. Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that Dublin is about 1/3 of the total cost. Mr. Ranc stated that for sewer, The City of Columbus' fee is \$3,044 and Dublin has a \$2,210 fee but reduced by 50% to \$1,105. No one total cost is the same.

5. Consider removing the 2-year expiration timeframe for the capacity fee waiver – make City fee waiver permanent.

Mr. Stanford shared that the 2-year waiver requires tracking and administration.

Ms. Krumb expressed support for removing the 2-year expiration. The program would be easier to administer. Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that if safety and health is priority is #1, then waive it all. If we fundamentally believe people are not connecting because they cannot afford to, then we should waive the Dublin connection fee. Ms. Krumb stated that the cost is going to be 50% or more of the cost of some homes. Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that if health and safety is our number one priority, we cannot force people to connect but should help them. Ms. Krumb asked about people who already paid. Mr. Ranc stated that it totals about \$20,000 and it is administratively easy to determine. Staff would recommend refunding those that have already connected. Ms. Krumb stated that waiving this cost will help. Vice Mayor De Rosa stated that it is doing the right thing. Taxpayers are paying millions of dollars to do this. Ms. Krumb stated that the City must refund those folks that have already paid it. Mr. Ranc stated that Staff completely agrees. Ms. Krumb stated that the more people we can

encourage, the better. Mr. Reiner stated that it is good for health, safety and welfare. Ms. Kramb stated that they are running on a septic system with a pipe to the river and that system has been there since 1915. Ms. Kramb stated that Franklin County inspects aeration systems annually. She stated that we should have the potential connections engineered/planned out. Mr. Hammersmith stated that Staff has estimates on those that haven't been designed. The most recent projects were both water and sanitary sewer and were just under \$2.6 million. That is a homeowner cost through assessment. Right now, the City is bearing that cost if the homeowner is not having to pay. Mr. Stanford stated that the program has served many homes that are failing. It is good feeling for us to be able to say it's here and ready.

Mr. Stanford shared what can be done to further encourage connections. It is a significant cost to homeowners and we want to tell the story of the City's investment in utility extension projects. It is important to give more information about the benefits of connecting to City water and sanitary sewer and the risks associated with not connecting. Residents can also be directed to available funding assistance programs. There are funds set up to provide assistance on a county basis for residents connecting to municipal sewer. Homeowners become ineligible once they have a failing system. There is a Dublin resident that has used it. Mr. Ranc stated that it looks like a pretty new fund. Staff will continue to work with the county and Ohio Environmental Protection Agency.

Mr. Stanford summarized staff recommendations as follows:

- Continue policy to provide public water and sanitary sewer extensions;
- Continue to prioritize utility extension projects based on health risk assessment;
- Waive 100% of City capacity fee and make waiver permanent to encourage connections;
- Encourage connections through improved public communication and on-going identification of and assistance with available funding assistance programs.

Clerk's Note: Vice Mayor De Rosa left the meeting.

Ms. Kramb offered support to waive the capacity fee and Mr. Reiner concurred. Mr. Hammersmith stated that for the next project (Trails End Drive 1B) staff surveyed residents to find out the interest level and 13 out of 18 responded and indicated they will connect. Mr. Ranc stated that staff will report to Council at the next Council meeting and come forward with a recommendation to amend the policy after that.

Ms. Kramb stated that as new residents come, they will connect. There are some younger people buying these and we will see more connections.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 6:18 p.m.

Deputy Clerk of Council

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