

Ravenna City Council Public Health and Safety Committee
Meeting Minutes
April 16, 2012

The Public Health and Safety Committee Meeting was called to order at 5:41 P.M. by Chairman, Bruce Ribelin. Present were: Sharon Spencer, Fred Berry, Frank Seman, Jack Ferguson, Amy Michael, Scott Rainone and Fran Ricciardi. Also attending the meeting were Service Director, Kelly Engelhart; Finance Director, Kim Cecora; Fire Chief, Geoffrey Cleveland; Utility Billing Supervisor, Mike Reynolds; Information Services Director, Bob Wain; firefighter, Brad Ryczek and Donna Swigart of 528 East Riddle Avenue, Ravenna.

Mr. Ribelin said the first item on the agenda is the Health Task Force Update.

Ms. Engelhart said generally Lucy Ribelin comes in and talks to this but they really have no update. They keep it on the agenda so that if there is something they can share with the committee. The last update given was from when they met in March. There is nothing new regarding the task force between Kent, Ravenna and Portage County.

Mr. Ribelin said the second item on the agenda is the citywide health and wellness program. He knows Mr. Ryczek brought information to the committee several months ago. Other meetings were to be set up and he's not sure if they have taken place or not.

Mr. Ryczek said he knows they are trying to get a citywide thing going here but it seems like it would be easier to him to start with the fire department and hopefully they can expand it. He would like to get permission to get the wheels turning here. City of Ravenna currently has all state standards enforced. Part of the state standards deal with health and wellness initiatives. They have not been obligated to go with it in Ravenna. He has a Seattle, Washington cost analysis. The first 16 pages is a review. They have about 6,000 employees. What he likes is that toward the end of the pages they deal with the program and without the program. The thing that got his attention was the prediction of going without it was going up from \$1.6 million to almost \$5 million. With it in place, they found out that the numbers stay constant. They stayed at \$2 million over the next five years. This is with the wellness program in place.

Mr. Ryczek went on to say that a lot of studies have shown anywhere from a 20-30% savings in Workers' Compensation claims and a reflection in medical claims. They depicted in annual physicals a lot of things that they currently do not do now. There's been documentation of finding people who had heart defects, certain injuries that needed rehab. With the history here, especially in the fire department, there are a lot of claims. Probably with this program in place, it could have helped them out or prevented. One guy recently had an issue and didn't find out until later. Part of this program is detection of people with heart problems, etc. This program shows nothing but benefits and the cost savings. Looking at the city of Ravenna, in 2011 the workers' comp. payments were \$151,387.00 citywide.

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Mr. Cecora said that the \$151,000 is the premium.

Mr. Ryczek said the premium is based on exposure. The 20% savings in medical costs and Workers' Comp. exposure alone there, the long term claims exposure is a great savings. What the Local 1340 is, they want to give people incentive to do this, being voluntary. They are looking for \$18,000.00 in incentives. The maximum exposure of \$10,000.00 for physicals. It's been proven that it is beneficial. The reason these physicals are important for the fire department is that the lack of education resulted in a guy retiring. If he would have been more proficient and better educated on the condition, things could have been handled differently. No matter what kind of thing they come across, their job is to help and rehab. these people and get them back to work. They need to have a healthy workforce. They have been doing it for the past few years. He thinks that is showing in the department. Guys are doing their jobs better when they are more healthy than they were before they had it. He thinks their department injury claims has been one of the lowest. He thinks what they are lacking is that they need to get the appropriate funds for their department size.

Mr. Ribelin asked if this would require a renegotiation of their existing contract.

Mr. Ryczek said they don't have any contractual language right now. Yes. It would require a renegotiation.

Mr. Ricciardi said he is assuming Mr. Ryczek's presentation is informational only. He's not asking them to take any action, is that correct?

Mr. Ryczek said they would like to see council and the mayor to negotiate with them on this.

Mr. Ricciardi said, he means in terms of ordinances, Mr. Ryczek isn't expecting anything to come out of this committee tonight.

Mr. Ryczek responded in the negative.

Mr. Ribelin asked if Mr. Cecora has met with Mr. Ryczek.

Mr. Cecora said they talked about it. He knew Mr. Ryczek was going to talk about wellness. He didn't know he was going to do the bargaining right there on the floor.

Mr. Ryczek said what they deal with every day and he's sure the numbers are the same citywide but he used the fire department as a model. That's what they are looking at to get something like this going.

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Ms. Michael asked if the physicals would be provided through Robinson Memorial Hospital or some other special agency.

Mr. Ryczek said they used to go through working partners.

Ms. Michael asked if they would be able to go through the city's health department.

Mr. Ryczek said they need somebody who is established with all of the equipment to do it.

Ms. Engelhart said the city doesn't have the resources to do it. They can do a blood pressure screening and cholesterol screening but any additional tests are not what they are capable of doing.

Mr. Finney said that it should be citywide, non-union employees also. He would absolutely have no problem taking a physical fitness test for \$1,000.00 a year. That would be great.

Mr. Ryczek said it's not a test.

Mr. Finney said that whatever the whole program is, it doesn't bother him.

Mr. Ryczek said that would be based on them doing a minimum of a cardio workout a day. Hopefully you improve every year.

Mr. Ribelin said he thinks Mr. Ryczek needs to sit down the mayor, finance director and perhaps the chairman of this committee and do that presentation, he would be glad to attend.

Mr. Finney said he would like them to consider all employees, not just the union employees when comes to this incentive.

Mr. Ricciardi said why don't they just pay everybody for staying in shape. What the heck is that? That's part of your own personal health, which they ought to be concerned with anyway. They shouldn't have to have anybody to pay them to maintain their own personal health. It makes you better at your job and what more incentive do you need than being better at your job? He doesn't understand why everybody has to go to get paid to do these kinds of things. It makes no sense to him at all. He will just tell them straight up that he thinks it's just another way to get into the pocket of the taxpayers and put more money into their own. That's his perspective on it.

Ms. Engelhart said she thinks the city should provide an employee wellness program citywide, but she does agree with Mr. Ricciardi, that it should not be paid out of taxpayer dollars. She thinks it is something that should be voluntary. If they want to participate that if you have more people who participate, you have less Workers' Comp. and medical claims. They are self-insured and there is also research out there for that. It should be a citywide benefit. If they are going to down that path, it would be all encompassing.

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Mr. Seman asked if Medical Mutual didn't offer that.

Ms. Engelhart said they talked about that. She thinks Mr. Cecora has met with them.

Mr. Seman said they called him and sent him information.

Mr. Ribelin said that if they were to sit down, he would think Ms. Engelhart, with her background, would participate.

Mr. Ryczek said there are these studies; defend, defend, defend. There are costs analysis as to what the major savings are across the country fire departments, police departments, employees what they save the cities when they do this. How do they encourage people, of course, dollars encourages people. He's not denying that. But when you do that and they see hundreds and thousands of dollars of savings, the city benefits to get their employees to participate in this. If you show an incentive to this person, then the city would save hundreds and thousands of dollars. It's like any kind of an incentive. You're not going to go work for free, are you? That's all he's trying to say.

Mr. Ricciardi said that the hours he works, a lot of it is for free but the incentive he needs is to maintain his health. He doesn't need somebody to put dollars in his pocket to tell him he needs to lose weight.

Mr. Ryczek said they aren't saying it is. They are saying if encourage people to do it; it's not like that's going to make them rich. It's an incentive for them to get healthy and the city save money.

Mr. Ricciardi asked if they don't want to do that anyway.

Mr. Ryczek responded said they are already doing it.

Mr. Ricciardi asked then what are they talking about if everybody is already doing this. Why are they now paying them to do what they are already doing?

Mr. Ryczek asked if they have read the city's charter.

Mr. Ricciardi said he reads it when he needs to; when he has something to look at. He hasn't read the entire Ohio Revised Code either. He reads sections where he needs to.

Mr. Finney said what is interesting is that the police department just took it out of their contract last month.

Mr. Ryczek said that if you don't want to do it then you don't want to do it. You're not going to get paid for it. If you don't want to work out, that's fine.

Mr. Finney said he does it without getting an incentive.

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Mr. Ryczek said they're not going to make it mandatory. They are making it volunteer so he doesn't get the point.

Ms. Engelhart said the point is, they don't think it should just be fire and police.

Mr. Ricciardi said let's leave it here; let's say this; they have a discussion with whoever they want and they'll see if there is benefit to the city to pay them incentive.

Mr. Ribelin concurred noting he doesn't think this is the place where they should be negotiating what they are going to do. They have to work that out.

Mr. Ricciardi said whatever comes up and if they think it's best for the community, they'll look at it.

Mr. Ribelin said the next item for discussion is the fleet leasing for police and fire vehicles.

Mr. Cecora said he met with Chief Adkins and Chief Cleveland. Currently the police department is looking to put together a long term lease package to replace cruisers on an annual basis along with a truck. Chief Cleveland is going to need a squad. They got some numbers from the dealerships. It looks like they can do it for about \$100,000.00 a year. Again, they had been leasing the aerial truck and the squad. One of the ways, rather than buying patrol cars every other year, is to go on a long term lease. Over the weekend, he took a look at it and while it's on the agenda for tonight, he would like to keep in the hopper but he really needs to talk to Mayor Bica as to where this fits in with the long term debt for the next two years. They have committed out to Honeywell for a couple hundred grand for the next two years. They've still got dispatch. They've got fueling station. They've got some other things. He needs to sit down with Mayor Bica and regroup with he, Chief Cleveland, Chief Adkins and look at a better timeline.

Mr. Ribelin asked if there is anything budgeted for this year.

Mr. Cecora responded in the negative. Right now, what do they feel is an adequate safety net in the capital improvement fund. They really need to talk about that and at what point do they want to deplete it to. He talked with Bob Finney about his projects, regrouped with Bob Wain about what he is going to be doing and he feels more comfortable talking to all parties concerned before they make a commitment like that. Once they get into the lease cycle, they will committing this amount, pretty much, every year. There are pros and cons to the leasing. Typically the vehicle repairs on the back end are a lot less than they would be. The bottom line is if they are going to commit some big dollars out, in the area of \$75,000.00 a year to this lease program, he wants to make sure there are adequate fund balances as a safety net.

Mr. Ribelin said the next item is the Health Commissioner update.

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Ms. Engelhart said she had hoped they could have the part-time health commissioner approved through the board and come to council as an appointment but they are a little slower in the process and looking at some potentially creative ways of working with the College of Public Health that could potentially help in this.

Mr. Ribelin said the next item for discussion is the access to park; police notification.

Ms. Engelhart said she spoke with Chief Adkins today and he sent Frank Cimino an email last week while Mr. Cimino was away and Chief Adkins suggested this issue be removed from the agenda until they have a legal opinion.

Mr. Ribelin said that the next item is the fire insurance escrow issue.

Ms. Engelhart said this is regarding discussions they had with the Chief Cleveland, Mayor Bica, Bob Finney and herself got together thinking about how they manage the properties when there is a fire and they are condemned. They've talked about this before in a council meeting. They would like to propose a change in the ordinance so that the bond escrow that currently goes to the fire chief will be held with the chief building official or inspector so that when the property follow up has to happen, that is being done through the building department. It is changing language for semantics so Mr. Finney can condemn the properties.

Mr. Ricciardi noted they had this discussion a while back and asked Chief Cleveland his position on the issue.

Chief Cleveland said he really doesn't know what they are trying to do or why they are trying to do it; why they can't do it the way it is now. He doesn't have a big problem with changing it. The time they talked about it before, there were some specific issues that seemed like they were reacting to.

Mr. Ricciardi asked if Chief Cleveland and Mr. Finney talk about this at all.

Chief Cleveland responded in the affirmative. They have the same opinions they had months ago.

Mr. Finney said that from a construction standpoint, it makes more sense that the building department maintains the contact information from the insurance company, the homeowners' information, the timeframe. It basically puts them in charge from the building side of things. If a building permit is pulled, they have the information. If a demolition order is issued, that is their department. Pretty much every facet of this insurance ordinance is building department related.

Mr. Ricciardi asked what the advantage is for Chief Cleveland having it.

Chief Cleveland said the access they have to a fire building because it is a fire damaged building. They have more access under the Ohio Fire Code. Once they pull permits, etc., the building department does then have more access to it.

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Mr. Ricciardi said Chief Cleveland is talking about physical access to the building; how does that effect the escrow fund and who controls that?

Chief Cleveland said he believes from an enforcement standpoint; being able to enforce the Ohio Fire Code and oftentimes fire inspectors enforce building codes also. He doesn't have a big problem with the building department taking over management of these funds. He's not sure as to all of the other ramifications as to advantages and disadvantages. He knows typically, from the research that he's done, is that usually that fund is handled by the fire chief, law director. He looked at about 20 different communities and that was the case, law director, finance director, fire chief. One instance is handled by the chief building official and that is in the city of Kent. It's not unprecedented. He doesn't have a big problem with it.

Ms. Engelhart said the intent was really to try to streamline the process so that they can get these homes condemned and demolished quicker if they need to because they are having an issue with having several fires in homes and they are just sitting. Nothing is really happening. Unless they get the building official involved to start pushing the property owners. They need to have some streamlined process.

Mr. Ricciardi said he would ask the same question to Ms. Engelhart as he did the chief. Why does whoever handle this escrow fund effect that process? They are just talking about dollars sitting there. They can still get the building department involved if they have a burned out home.

Ms. Engelhart said they can and what they are trying to do is formulate a process that manages that. One of the components was that when you move the escrow account to the building department then all of the responsibility pretty much lies within the building department.

Mr. Ricciardi asked if they ever cooperate with each other in the city in terms of these burned out homes that need condemned. Does the building department talk to the fire department and vice versa. He's kind of getting the idea that there is a disconnect there somewhere.

Mr. Finney said ultimately this is a building department related issue. He looked at the ordinance to see when this was passed. The Ohio Revised Code simply states that a person shall be placed in charge of holding this escrow. In the early 1990s, Paul Postlethwaite was the building official. He worked out of his house, part-time. He doesn't know what his status was but in the early 90s when Bob Miller was hired to be a fulltime official, it was never changed. From the standard of what takes place after a fire, it is all building department. The fire department has very little to do with the construction end of any of it, if any. It just makes senses that the building department handles it from calculating the damage of the fire from discussing with the insurance company, holding the funds, etc. He is not asking for more work to do.

Mr. Ricciardi asked, generally speaking, how long after the fire does he get access to the building.

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Mr. Finney said sometimes it's three to four weeks.

Mr. Ricciardi asked Chief Cleveland if that is unusual, length of time.

Chief Cleveland said he's not sure. Usually the building department gets access when they pull permits. Then they are talking about residential property. They have fires in other types of buildings. Oftentimes it does effect the fire protection system, which is mostly; to say they don't have any interest in a fire damaged building is not exactly accurate; but as far as the question goes, three or four weeks, he would guess so. They may get permits before that. Any interest they would have from a fire service standpoint is mostly investigative in nature. They do also fire damage estimates. They're not necessarily in the rehab business. He agrees that is mostly the building department issue.

Mr. Ricciardi said his question still remains, if it doesn't matter who controls these funds, he doesn't see how it streamlines the process any more or less.

Ms. Engelhart said maybe they need to take it away from both departments and put it with the finance director or with the service director and then somebody with authority has the ability to say "this stuff needs to get done". She thinks what is happening right now is they are struggling with how do they make sure notification is being done that isn't necessarily right now being done, and if it's being held in one department vs. another and that's the problem, then move it.

Mr. Ricciardi said he just doesn't understand how it effects the physical aspects of what they are doing with these buildings.

Mr. Ribelin said that it sounds to him that it would help streamline the process and move away from the disconnect they are talking about.

There being no questions or comments, it was decided by those present that a tracking sheet would be submitted for Finance Committee approval.

Mr. Ribelin said the next item for discussion is the hazardous chemical cleanup.

Ms. Engelhart said this is really in regards to meth labs. They lumped it into hazard chemicals from the standpoint of they would like to introduce an ordinance. They currently do not have language written and do have an example from Kent. They can have it available for Finance. They didn't want to just say meth labs. They wanted it to include, and be all encompassing, to talk about if there were any hazardous chemicals that was in a property that they could have some following actions. How it all came about was that whenever there was a call to a home and it was determined there was meth lab activity in that home, they used to call the department of drug enforcement agency. The drug enforcement agency used to pay for the cleanup and remediation of the homes. They are no longer doing that. The state has no funding to clean up those problems so they trickled it down to a local jurisdictional problem. What the other jurisdictions have done is to put the language that it's the property owners' responsibility

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for the cleanup. The cost of the two recently was \$1200 to \$1500.

Mr. Ribelin said he would concur with that.

Ms. Michael concurred.

Mr. Ribelin said the next item is to discussion an appropriation for immediate response equipment for the police department.

Captain Wallis said everybody is aware of what happened in Chardon and there are things happening in the small communities, smaller than Ravenna or the same size. The philosophy he always tries to use is not if, it's when it's going to happen. As they know, crime isn't getting any better. It's not getting any less violent. They just had an incident where a young man pulled out an air soft gun and induced panic. They locked down West Main School. People become disgruntled and bring guns into the workplace or schools and bad things happen. What they are asking for is to outfit the cars.

Captain Wallis gave a detailed explanation of the equipment being requested.

Captain Wallis noted that it is costly but over time the equipment will be maintained, taken in and out of service. He has been on SWAT for 15 years. The problem with SWAT is it generally times them 45 minutes to an hour once the page goes out to get to a situation. What they are relying on, as a police department and cities, are initial responders who have the proper equipment to deal with something because as they saw, if they are familiar with Columbine, they were told to just sit and wait for SWAT. The problem with that is they no longer do that because waiting for SWAT a lot of people can get hurt while the initial police could have responded and averted some kind of disaster. It's important to try to get this equipment. He doesn't need to tell them the importance of it. He knows it is money and it's expensive. But he also thinks the equipment they are asking for is important to save lives and make this a safer community and ensure the safety of the officers.

Ms. Michael said Captain Wallis hit it right on the head when he said "when". It's getting closer and closer to home. She knows the cost of something like that is expensive but they are looking at their children, their loved ones, their lives. To her, that is priceless. Her opinion is that she wants to do whatever she can to help the police protect them. It's a reality check as to whether or not they are ready if something like this happens in our community.

Captain Wallis said not to get him wrong. They do have equipment and they train. But the equipment they are asking for in the cars is going to make for it safer for everybody involved; for the police to go home and everybody else to go home and, of course, whatever happens to the bad guy. He was on SWAT and went to Copley to respond and it was the initial patrol officer who intervened and stopped the bad guy from shooting up any more of his neighborhood.

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Mr. Ricciardi said that even closer to home was the incident in Brimfield eight or nine years ago. The bottom line was, nobody had a rifle and this guy did. Most law enforcement were carrying shotguns only. Some of the officers went home and got their own rifles.

Mr. Ribelin said that he thinks that not only is it important to protect the kids in the community and the citizens, it is important they have the equipment necessary to protect themselves. They are very important to this community and they want to have the officers equipped.

Captain Wallis said there is a bit of a sticker shock. This stuff is expensive. Anytime they paint it black and it says SWAT or Police on it, it raises the price. Hopefully they will never have to use any of this equipment but the one time they need to, they are going to want to have the right tools.

Mr. Seman asked if Captain Wallis is talking about outfitting cars or each individual officer.

Captain Wallis said the thought was that each car would have the equipment, helmet and a vest. It would be put into some type of container. He would say they are looking at outfitting eight cars. The theory is that an officer gets into a patrol car, if something happens they can pull their vests out. It's going to have extra rifle magazines, extra pistol magazines for a gun, a first aid kit and they are also looking at getting suppressors for the guns. This is a safety feature. It reduces the amount of noise the officer has to endure and also, if they ever have to go into a school, the schools are made of concrete and they echo. If they ever have to shoot inside a building, the officers and innocent bystanders' hearing will be damaged.

Mr. Ribelin asked if they have any idea as to the cost.

Captain Wallis said he would have to get the number. The vests are \$349.00. There are two already.

Ms. Engelhart said the tracking sheet has all the items put together including sledge hammers, etc., to get into buildings. The request was \$22,000.00 for everything.

Ms. Michael asked if there is any funding out there for this type of thing, maybe in 911 fund.

Captain Wallis said they also talked about asking for donations. There are a lot of benevolent agencies that have money to donate.

Mr. Ribelin asked if there is any money budgeted for police equipment.

Mr. Cecora responded that there is no money whatsoever budgeted. This would be a standalone appropriation if they were to do it.

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Captain Wallis said there is no way to sugar coat it; it's a lot of money. They will either pay now or pay later though. They can buy it now and protect everybody involved or if they don't, what's going to happen, and you can see this in every incident, there is always something where the officers didn't have a piece of equipment that might have helped and they're getting sued. He knows there is some sticker shock but he feels it is necessary.

Mr. Ribelin said he would personally like to be able to do this. Ms. Michael concurred.

Captain Wallis said just because they got it, doesn't mean they won't stop seeking out donations from maybe some of the businesses, etc. The money received from donations would be put back.

There being no questions or comments, it was decided by those present that a tracking sheet would be submitted for Finance Committee approval.

There being no further business for discussion, the meeting adjourned at 6:45 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

Bruce Ribelin, Chairman
Public Health and Safety Committee