

MINUTES OF STREETS & SIDEWALKS COMMITTEE MEETING
May 14, 2012

The Meeting of the Ravenna City Streets & Sidewalks Committee was called to order at 7:26 P.M. by Chairman, Jack Ferguson. In attendance were Sharon Spencer, Fred Berry, Frank Seman, Bruce Ribelin, Scott Rainone, Amy Michael and Fran Ricciardi. Also attending the meeting were Mayor Joe Bica; Service Director, Kelly Engelhart; Finance Director, Kim Cecora; City Engineer, Bob Finney; Marc Resnik of 1102 East Riddle Avenue, Ravenna and Nick Dudek of 328 North Prospect Street, Ravenna.

Ms. Engelhart said the first item they would like to bring to the committee is if they would be willing to change the Codified Ordinances to limit what constitutes high grass. When they start put violation notices out, they would like to put an inch limit and anything that exceeds 8" would be considered high grass. If they want something other than 8", they can talk about it.

Mr. Ricciardi said they have ordinances that speak to the height of shrubs and bushes in front of residences. He brought this issue up a number of times over the years but there is a place across from the old high school that probably has 20 foot tall hedges and encroach upon the sidewalk.

Mr. Finney said he has a page of bush violations on his desk. He just has to send out the letters. They'll do their best and they know there are going to be grumblings.

After some discussion, it was decided by those present that the limit would be 6" rather than 8".

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

Mr. Ferguson said the next item for discussion is the city arborist.

Ms. Engelhart said this is an opportunity to work collaboratively with another municipality. The city of Stow has offered to work with them to loan out their certified arborist on staff for a minimal fee, as needed, to evaluate trees or help with tree planting, two hour minimum callout at \$45.00 an hour plus \$5.00 travel expenses. It would be a minimum of \$95.00 each time they needed them to come out. This could not exceed four hours per week.

Ms. Engelhart said that in the current code it says the service director has the discretion to make these decisions since there isn't a Shade Tree Commission, in regards to tree removal. Her concern is, she can stand and look at a 100 foot tree and if it doesn't have leaves, she can say that it's dead. When they call Davy Tree they believe the opinions are not unbiased. If you ask for a company that has cutting down trees as their business. If you ask them to evaluate a tree, they are going to say that tree is bad and needs to come down. They make money in that. They would rather have an independent individual who is trained for this type of thing.

Mayor Bica said they believe that working collaboratively with the city of Stow on an as needed basis will serve them very well. Another thing is, too, there is a significant amount of money that has been accruing for tree planting and they would like this arborist to start giving recommendations on the proper trees for certain areas.

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Ms. Michael asked if the Shade Tree Commission is going to start meeting again; aren't they going to set that back up. She knows Mayor Bica said he was going to check into it about a year ago.

Mayor Bica said once they get this arborist going and there are some removals and plantings, he thinks that would be a perfect time to bring these people in and involve them.

Mr. Seman asked if they are going to try to get back into the tree city status.

Ms. Engelhart said she thinks that is something the Shade Tree Commission can address because there are certain requirements to maintain that status.

Mr. Seman said he would like to get back to that.

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

Mr. Seman said that it is not one individual thing that bothers him but it's collective things where they sat in council chambers for a year and cut the daylights out of the budget. Now, they're not putting it all back but they're throwing pieces. Tonight they talked about HR; they talked about an arborist; an IT person. This was all stuff that was cut. Their plans for them are good. He just doesn't want to be laying people off after they get done.

Mayor Bica responded that they didn't have an IT person and they cut the arborist.

Mr. Seman interjected that this happens at every meeting.

Mayor Bica said the amount of money they are talking about is no where near, anywhere of what they used to spend.

Mr. Seman said that's how the dam begins to break; one little crack in it. The other was the health assessment, which is a great product and would be a great service to the community. He doesn't have an argument with it. But when he keeps adding all these up, are they going to come in when they get to December that they have to let three or four people go.

Mayor Bica said that the health commissioner and Kent State is covered with a budgeted amount of money. It was already budgeted. The IT person was covered within the budget. The \$2,000.00 for the HR was not covered.

Mr. Seman said he's not going to argue about it. He's just saying that's what is running through his mind as they do these things.

Mayor Bica said he understands what he is saying but he has to realize what has been budgeted and what has not been budgeted that they are dealing with.

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Mr. Seman said he doesn't understand when Mr. Cecora says 76% of the IT position is coming out of the general fund.

Mayor Bica said that is correct. If you do the allocation of the total amount that was budgeted for 2012, 76% of that was general fund money.

Mr. Seman asked if council salaries aren't run across the same way.

Mr. Cecora said it's a different allocation. They did this based on number of work stations. Obviously, with the safety forces, that is the bulk of the work stations that received the allocation.

Mayor Bica said the reason they did it by terminal allocation was that's the way the county does it and they felt it was the most appropriate way to divvy up the amount of work and expense based on all the departments; how many terminals you have divided by X.

Ms. Engelhart said if they really based it on where the IT need is, there would be even more because the PD has even more need not just based on terminals but their data terminals and dispatch center and all of the IT needs that just go into the police department they aren't even taking into account. They are spreading that cost around through the other departments.

Mr. Ricciardi said the last time they met, they were talking about cutting health insurance benefits for some employees while they are now funding a study to consider health benefits for the community. That just seems a little odd to him.

Mr. Finney said that the Honeywell project started. They had the first meeting regarding the traffic signal project. This is just for information. There are certain signals in town that are part of the Honeywell project that he plans on removing. There will be a study done to validate the signal warrant of removal. One signal is Spruce and Sycamore. It's been on flash for a very long time. Another one is potentially Chestnut and Central, possibly Main and Clinton and the GE traffic light. All of them will be studied and verified that they're not needed. In the end council has the right to veto anything any study states per ordinance. He doesn't know how it got written in there but it did and he's sure it's been there for a long time. One of the other key components is he is meeting with the school next week to discuss their bus traffic, their walking traffic. Several of the signals, he thinks, were set up for the neighborhood schools. He knows the school has some plans to possibly make some changes. When the high school is taken down, they won't necessarily need the signal at Clinton. He knows there is a little bit of history there with a signal at Elm and a signal at Clinton. He just wanted them to be aware that he will be bringing this to committee. He knows there are few of them who might be emotional about some of these signals. He's going to have a study done by an engineering firm that says they are either needed or not needed. The two key contractor suppliers are very much astute with the Federal Highway Administration's guidelines. Originally, they thought this would be a good program because they could come in through the back door and say they're not using state of federal money, therefore, they can do what they want to do. They're telling him they are not going to do that. They're going to stick to the federal guidelines. They don't want the lawsuits.

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Mr. Finney went on to say that one of the other recommendations is in the downtown, before the downtown signals were replaced in 1994 or 1995, they are recommending the use of 12" signals rather than the little 8". They are saying the signals that currently hang are not up to standard. They are looking to him to tell them if he wants to stay substandard or bring it up to 2012 Federal Highway Standards. Cost isn't an issue here. They've already negotiated the price but they are going to be changing the look of the downtown a little. If they go with the recommendation they are going to lose the current signals. Another item is the pedestrian crossings. There will be eight crossings at each intersection. Basically there will be a push button to tell somebody to walk or don't walk. These are changes and brings it up to Federal Highway Standards. Council will get to make the decision at that point, to either stay with what they have or move forward. They can still keep the black signal heads to keep the downtown look; fluted poles, etc. these are decisions they are going to have to make.

Mr. Ricciardi asked how many poles would be added to the downtown.

Mr. Finney responded that he didn't know. It's his intent to minimize them as much as possible. The last thing he wants is one pole at each corner. The worse case, they'll stick the string poles that are currently there, the fluted poles with the wire across. They had budgeted to put mast arms in but he has a feeling they are going to want to put four mast arms in, one on each corner. He's not a big fan of that. The recommendations will be made once the engineering is done. There will be no additional cost.

Mr. Finney said that to piggyback the CDBG Grant, he will have to pitch in another \$7,000.00 to \$8,000.00 in annual paving money for construction next year. That is just for one street. It's kind of like what they did on Scranton Street a couple of years ago. There was a portion of CDBG and then he paid the rest through the annual paving program. This is the same thing. This would be for construction next year. The way the grant runs is current year for construction. This is informational only.

There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 7:50 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

Jack Ferguson, Chairman
Streets & Sidewalks Committee