

A regular meeting of the Council of the City of Blue Ash, Ohio, was held on February 24, 2005. Mayor Rick Bryan called the meeting to order in Council Chambers at 7:30 PM.

OPENING CEREMONIES

Mayor Bryan led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Rick Bryan, Vice Mayor Robert Buckman, Councilman Lee Czerwonka, Councilman Henry Stacey, Councilwoman Stephanie Stoller, Councilman James Sumner, and Councilman Mark Weber

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Marvin Thompson, Solicitor Mark Vander Laan, Clerk of Council Jamie Eifert, Deputy Clerk of Council Sue Bennett, Assistant City Manager David Waltz, Treasurer/ Administrative Services Director James Pfeffer, Parks & Recreation Director Chuck Funk, Service Director Dennis Albrinck, member of the press, and interested citizens

Mayor Bryan appointed Parks & Recreation Director Chuck Funk and Service Director Denny Albrinck to read the legislation in its entirety in the rear of Council Chambers. Mr. Bryan explained to the audience that anyone interested in hearing the ordinances and resolutions read in their entirety is welcome to move to the rear of the Chambers. He also mentioned that written copies of the legislation on tonight's agenda may be found on the ledges near the City Administration's desks.

ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

Councilwoman Stoller moved, Councilman Weber seconded to accept the agenda. A voice vote was taken. All members present voted yes. Motion carried.

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER
2. OPENING CEREMONIES
3. ROLL CALL - Clerk of Council Jamie K. Eifert
4. APPOINTMENT OF PERSON(S) TO READ ORDINANCES IN FULL IN REAR OF COUNCIL CHAMBERS
5. ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA
6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
 - a. Regular Meeting of January 27, 2005
7. COMMUNICATIONS
 - a. Communications to Council - Clerk of Council Jamie K. Eifert
 - b. Reports From Outside Agencies
 - c. Mayor's Report - January 2005 - Honorable Rick Bryan
 - d. Financial Report - Motion to accept the report for January 2005
8. HEARINGS FROM CITIZENS
9. COMMITTEE REPORTS
 - a. Finance & Administration Committee, Mark F. Weber, Chairperson
 1. Ordinance No. 2005-18, amending Chapter 131 of the Blue Ash Code of Ordinances and Section 6 of the Employment Agreement
 2. Ordinance No. 2005-19, authorizing a contract with the State of Ohio for accounting services associated with 2004 audit year activities
 3. Motion authorizing the payment of expenses associated with Student Government Day (April 14th)
 - b. Parks & Recreation Committee, Lee Czerwonka, Chairperson
 1. Ordinance No. 2005-20, awarding bid for the roof replacement project at 6171 Interstate Circle
 - c. Public Works Committee, Henry S. Stacey, Chairperson
 1. Ordinance No. 2005-15, authorizing purchase of a dump truck and a mini excavator from the State's bid list

- d. Planning & Zoning Committee, James W. Sumner, Chairperson
 - 1. Ordinance No. 2005-13, amending Chapter 1305 of the Blue Ash Code of Ordinances regarding construction fees

10. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

11. ADJOURNMENT”

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Czerwonka moved, Councilman Stacey seconded to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of January 27, 2005. A voice vote was taken. All members present voted yes. Motion carried.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications to Council

There were no communications to Council.

Reports From Outside Agencies

Tim Ingram, Health Commissioner of the General Health District, was present at the meeting to discuss with Council the concept of Blue Ash’s adopting no-smoking ban legislation throughout the City. He discussed and presented many statistics supporting the dangers of second-hand smoke. There appears to be a movement both internationally and nationally to protect people from second-hand smoke, and locally, examples can be found with Columbus, Toledo, and Lexington passing variations of the no-smoking ban legislation. A telephone survey was done of 300 Blue Ash residents, and statistics from that survey appear to support no-smoking laws in the community by its constituents. Kathy Lordo from the General Health District further explained that Fallon Research of Cincinnati did this survey in May 2004. They also did similar surveys with the communities of Forest Park and Montgomery (using grant financing).

In addressing questions from Council, Mr. Ingram commented that no survey of people who work in Blue Ash was made, just of those 300 residents. Other communities have done many variations of the no-smoking ordinances, such as to exempt certain establishments such as bars. These no-smoking ordinances usually relate only to indoor places – not outdoor venues, such as parks, etc. such as Blue Ash’s Towne Square. Mr. Ingram answered several questions from Council members.

Mayor's Report – January 2005

RECEIPTS:

Fines	\$26,527.00
Bonds & BMV fees carried over.....	\$300.00
Interest Earned.....	\$6.16
Bonds collected.....	\$900.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS:.....	\$27,733.16

DISBURSEMENTS:

To Blue Ash (fines/costs/interest/Expungements/forfeitures)	\$19,307.16
To the State of OH.....	\$7,141.00
Refund of Overpaid Fine	\$ 85.00
Bond Money applied.....	\$430.00
Bond Money returned	\$120.00
TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS.....	\$27,083.16

BALANCE IN BONDS:.....	\$650.00
Mayor’s Court traffic citations.....	228
Mayor’s Court criminal citations	32
TOTAL	260
January Rev. from Mayor’s Ct. Cases	\$19,307.16

Financial Report – January 2005

Vice Mayor Buckman moved, Councilwoman Stoller seconded to accept the Financial Report for January 2005 as submitted. A voice vote was taken. All members present voted yes. Motion carried.

**CITY OF BLUE ASH FINANCIAL POSITION STATEMENT
FOR THE MONTH ENDING JANUARY 31, 2005**

MONTH TO DATE	2004	2005
START OF MONTH FUND BALANCE: 1-1-05	\$9,092,894.75	\$14,622,289.87
Revenues:		
Earnings Tax Collections:	1,936,246.99	2,391,600.84
Debt Financing (long term)	0	0
Debt Financing (short term)	0	0
Other Revenue Received:	<u>276,145.78</u>	<u>456,067.39</u>
= Total Monthly Receipts	2,212,392.77	2,847,668.23
Expenditures:		
Bond Retirement	0	0
Short term debt refinancing	0	5,100,000.00
Other Expenditures:	<u>2,181,733.66</u>	<u>2,456,480.20</u>
= Total Monthly Expenditures:	<u>-2,181,733.66</u>	<u>-7,556,480.20</u>
ENDING FUND BALANCE: 1-31-05	9,123,553.86	9,913,477.90

100% of the fund balance was invested as of 1-31-05. Interest paid to date on matured investments: \$22,291.05. Receipt and expenditure figures do not include interfund transfers.

**BLUE ASH INCOME TAX DIVISION INCOME TAX RECEIPT SUMMARY
FOR MONTH ENDING JANUARY 31, 2005**

MONTH-TO-DATE STATUS	2004	2005
Business Net Profit	304,105.93	594,897.70
Resident Net Profit	51,448.44	62,006.05
Non-Resident Net Profit	12,780.92	16,939.14
Subcontractor Net Profit	129.00	2,100.50
Net Profit Total	<u>368,464.29</u>	<u>675,943.39</u>
Withholding	1,533,833.86	1,676,147.39
Subcontractor Withholding	33,948.84	39,510.06
Withholding Total	<u>1,567,782.70</u>	<u>1,715,657.45</u>
Monthly Collection Totals	1,936,246.99	2,391,600.84
Year-To-Date Refund Totals	<u><u>12,258.74</u></u>	<u><u>23,248.68</u></u>

HEARINGS FROM CITIZENS

Mr. Wes Fricke, president of the Kenview Hills Homeowners Association, was present to represent his neighborhood's views upon the proposed removal of the pedestrian bridge over Ronald Reagan Highway (leading to the Sycamore Junior High). He commented that this bridge is important to the Kenview Hills residents, and it is used extensively, especially by students while school is in session and residents when special events are occurring (mostly over the summer months). It is his opinion that it would not be in the best interest of the citizens of this neighborhood to remove the bridge.

Gail Wulker, 9269 Fidelis Drive, supported Mr. Fricke's views that the bridge is important to the neighborhood. She added that the Junior High sports teams, including Lacrosse and Track, often use the bridge to run/exercise in their neighborhood. She confirmed that residents use it weekly throughout the summer to walk to the concerts and other events in downtown Blue Ash.

Councilman Sumner commented that he has received many calls from area residents regarding their desire to preserve this bridge. He firmly believes that the safety improvements desired by ODOT (to improve the I-71/Ronald Reagan interchange) can be made while preserving the bridge.

Mayor Bryan commented that it would be his preference to have ODOT attend a future Council meeting to explain their position and the need for the bridge to be removed (i.e., to better understand the safety issue). He would also like to hear from ODOT options given Council's desire and goal to maintain the connectivity of its residential neighborhoods.

(Note: a straw vote was taken later in the meeting regarding Council's desire to present a resolution supporting preservation of the bridge, and that resolution will be drafted for the next meeting.)

Mayor Bryan thanked the many residents from the Kenview Hills neighborhood in attendance at tonight's meeting for taking the time to express their views to Council tonight.

Betty Brooks, Blue Ash Road, commented that she believed the survey previously discussed by the Health District representatives seemed biased as she did not believe that asking only 300 people would be truly representative.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Prior to the Council meeting, Council members received the following report describing agenda items:

"The following offers a brief description of the items included on the February 24th Council Agenda:

9.a.1. Ordinance No. 2005-18 - Amending Chapters 131 and 133 of the Blue Ash Code of Ordinances

As has been discussed with Council, the first portion of this ordinance would address the reinstatement of the position of Management Analyst for the purpose of providing a support position to the City Manager's Office. The person in such a position would be available to provide additional assistance on any upcoming projects including but not restricted to: collecting comparative data for union negotiations; aiding with various technology initiatives; assisting with miscellaneous elements of Capital Improvement Projects, etc. The pay range for this position would be 13(II).

The second portion of this ordinance, also discussed with Council, authorizes the recommended change to the management contract.

Please address questions regarding this ordinance to the City Manager.

9.a.2. Ordinance No. 2005-19 - Authorizing a contract with the State of Ohio for accounting services associated with 2004 audit year activities

As was the case for the 1996 through 2003 fiscal year audits, the City's 2004 audit is being performed on-site by the Auditor's Office of the State of Ohio, and it would be appropriate for Council to consider an ordinance authorizing those services as well as for supplemental accounting services pertaining to a review of the City's 2004 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. Ordinance No. 2005-19 authorizes this contract with the Auditor of State for the fiscal year 2004 audit for an amount not to exceed \$40,000.

Please direct questions regarding this ordinance or the audit process to the Treasurer.

9.a.3. Motion authorizing the payment of expenses associated with Student Government Day (April 14th)

Student Government Day is planned for the first April Council meeting. With Easter falling relatively early this year (March 27th), and with at least one known Council absence in early March, the decision was made for this event to remain in April. The Administration has checked with the three schools that have typically participated in the past (Sycamore, Ursuline, and Moeller), and this day would appear to work well with their academic and holiday schedules.

This motion would appropriately authorize related expenses associated with the event (typically lunch and dinner costs). Please address questions regarding this motion to the Treasurer.

9.b.1. Ordinance No. 2005-20 - Awarding bid for the roof replacement project at 6171 Interstate Circle

Bids were recently solicited for the roof replacement project at the new/future home of the Parks & Grounds division staff and equipment at 6171 Interstate Circle. Bids were advertised in the *Northeast Suburban Life-Press* on February 9th for this roof replacement project, and bids were opened on February 22nd at 9:00AM.

The City received six bids for the project, and the recommended bid award is to the low bidder, C.A. Eckstein, Inc., of Cincinnati for a base amount of \$133,366 plus costs related to the unit prices as outlined on the bid summary as well as within the ordinance. The recommended method of roof replacement is the fully-adhered membrane style (reflecting the base bid price), and the unit prices reflect additional work that must be done for the project; however, exact measurements cannot be calculated until the existing roof has been removed.

As the bids were opened on February 22nd (the day these packets were assembled), the Administration will continue verifying references for this contractor. Please direct questions regarding this project or ordinance to the Parks & Recreation Director.

9.c.1. Ordinance No. 2005-15 - Authorizing purchase of a dump truck and a mini excavator from the State's bid list

The Service Department proposes to replace a 1990 Ford dump truck to provide greater reliability and reduce maintenance cost for its fleet of vehicles. The Service Department needs dictated the use of a single axle dump truck in lieu of a replacement tandem truck. This change will enable the Service Department to maneuver in tight areas as well as save in the cost of a higher priced tandem dump.

While researching a replacement, it was deemed in the City's best interest to purchase a new dump truck from International Truck and Engine Corporation through the State of Ohio's Cooperative Purchasing Agreement. The total price of the dump truck with dump body and related accessories is \$74,241. International will give us a trade-in allowance of \$9,000.00 for the 1990 Ford tandem dump truck bringing the total for a new truck to \$65,241. We will not purchase a new v-box and spreader for this truck, but rather retrofit one of those we presently have to fit the new truck. After a complete review of the specifics of this purchase by Service Department personnel, we recommend the City purchase one new dump truck with dump body and related accessories from International Truck and Engine Corporation through the State of Ohio Cooperative Purchasing Agreement.

In order to address the need to redefine drainage swales; repair, replace and construct storm sewers, sidewalks, and curbs; and other related activities, the Service Department submitted a request to purchase a mini excavator capable of performing these tasks in the 2005 budget that has been approved.

While researching the purchase of a mini excavator, it was deemed in the City's best interest to purchase a new Bobcat 430ZHS Excavator from Bobcat Enterprises through the State of Ohio's Cooperative Purchasing Agreement. The total price of the mini excavator is \$32,905.94. After a complete review of the specifics of this purchase by Service Department personnel, we recommend the City purchase one (1) new Bobcat 430ZHS Excavator and related accessories from Bobcat Enterprises through the State of Ohio Cooperative Purchasing Agreement.

Please direct questions regarding this ordinance to the Service Director.

9.d.1. Ordinance No. 2005-13 - Amending Chapter 1305 of the Blue Ash Code of Ordinances regarding construction fees

Ordinance No. 2005-13 amends the fees associated with Blue Ash building and permit fees. It essentially ties the Blue Ash fees for building permits, inspections, and related activities to the Schedule of Fees published by the Hamilton County Building Inspections Department (adopted by reference).

Please direct questions regarding this ordinance to the Assistant City Manager."

Finance & Administration Committee, Mark F. Weber, Chairperson

Councilman Weber asked the Clerk to read Ordinance No. 2005-18 by title only.

THEN WAS PRESENTED AND READ BY TITLE ONLY:

ORDINANCE NO. 2005-18

AMENDING SEC. 131.07-1 and 131.07-133 OF CHAPTER 131 OF THE BLUE ASH CODE OF ORDINANCES; AND AMENDING THE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT AUTHORIZED VIA ORDINANCE NO. 2003-40; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

Councilman Weber moved, Councilman Stacey seconded to suspend the rules of Council requiring a second reading of the ordinance. The Clerk called the roll. Councilpersons Weber, Sumner, Buckman, Stacey, Czerwonka, Stoller, and Mayor Bryan voted yes. Seven yeses. Motion carried.

Councilman Weber moved, Councilwoman Stoller seconded to adopt Ordinance No. 2005-18. There being no discussion, the Clerk called the roll. Councilpersons Sumner, Buckman, Stacey, Czerwonka, Stoller, Weber, and Mayor Bryan voted yes. Seven yeses. Ordinance No. 2005-18 passed.

Councilman Weber asked the Clerk to read Ordinance No. 2005-19 by title only.

THEN WAS PRESENTED AND READ BY TITLE ONLY:

ORDINANCE NO. 2005-19

AUTHORIZING A PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACT WITH THE OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR OF THE STATE OF OHIO FOR AUDIT AND ACCOUNTING SERVICES IN 2005 (FOR THE 2004 AUDIT YEAR) FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$40,000; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

Councilman Weber moved, Councilman Stacey seconded to suspend the rules of Council requiring a second reading of the ordinance. The Clerk called the roll. Councilpersons Buckman, Stacey, Czerwonka, Stoller, Weber, Sumner, and Mayor Bryan voted yes. Seven yeses. Motion carried.

Councilman Weber moved, Councilman Stacey seconded to adopt Ordinance No. 2005-19. There being no discussion, the Clerk called the roll. Councilpersons Stacey, Czerwonka, Stoller, Weber, Sumner, Buckman, and Mayor Bryan voted yes. Seven yeses. Ordinance No. 2005-19 passed.

Councilman Weber moved, Councilman Stacey seconded to authorize the payment of expenses associated with Student Government Day. A voice vote was taken. All members voted yes. Motion carried.

Parks & Recreation Committee, Lee Czerwonka, Chairperson

Councilman Czerwonka asked the Clerk to read Ordinance No. 2005-20 by title only.

THEN WAS PRESENTED AND READ BY TITLE ONLY:

ORDINANCE NO. 2005-20

AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO AWARD A BID FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF THE ROOF AT THE CITY-OWNED 6171 INTERSTATE CIRCLE FACILITY; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

Councilman Czerwonka moved, Councilwoman Stoller seconded to suspend the rules of Council requiring a second reading of the ordinance. The Clerk called the roll. Councilpersons Czerwonka, Stoller, Weber, Sumner, Buckman, Stacey, and Mayor Bryan voted yes. Seven yeses. Motion carried.

Councilman Czerwonka moved, Councilman Stacey seconded to adopt Ordinance No. 2005-20. In addressing questions from Councilmen Weber and Buckman, Parks & Recreation Director Chuck Funk and City Manager Marvin Thompson explained that the bids came in lower than expected, the Administration has been checking references closely on the low bidder (a company with whom Blue Ash does not have first-hand experience) and has found only high recommendations, and they fully expect this renovation project to finish within budget. There being no further discussion, the Clerk called the roll. Councilpersons Stoller, Weber, Sumner, Buckman, Stacey, Czerwonka, and Mayor Bryan voted yes. Seven yeses. Ordinance No. 2005-20 passed.

Public Works Committee, Henry S. Stacey, Chairperson

Councilman Stacey asked the Clerk to read Ordinance No. 2005-15 by title only.

THEN WAS PRESENTED AND READ BY TITLE ONLY:

ORDINANCE NO. 2005-15

AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF A DUMP TRUCK WITH DUMP BODY AND RELATED ACCESSORIES AND A MINI EXCAVATOR AND RELATED ACCESSORIES FOR SERVICE DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES THROUGH THE STATE OF OHIO'S COOPERATIVE PURCHASING AGREEMENT; AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

Councilman Stacey moved, Councilman Czerwonka seconded to suspend the rules of Council requiring a second reading of the ordinance. The Clerk called the roll. Councilpersons Weber, Sumner, Buckman, Stacey, Czerwonka, Stoller, and Mayor Bryan voted yes. Seven yeses. Motion carried.

Councilman Stacey moved, Councilwoman Stoller seconded to adopt Ordinance No. 2005-15. There being no discussion, the Clerk called the roll. Councilpersons Sumner, Buckman, Stacey, Czerwonka, Stoller, Weber, and Mayor Bryan voted yes. Seven yeases. Ordinance No. 2005-15 passed.

Planning & Zoning Committee, James W. Sumner, Chairperson

The Clerk was asked to read Ordinance No. 2005-13 by title only.

THEN WAS PRESENTED AND READ BY TITLE ONLY:

ORDINANCE NO. 2005-13

AMENDING SECTION 1305.07 OF CHAPTER 1305 OF THE
BLUE ASH CODE OF ORDINANCES TO ADOPT A REVISED
SCHEDULE OF CONSTRUCTION FEES TO BE EFFECTIVE APRIL
1, 2005

Councilman Sumner moved, Councilwoman Stoller seconded to suspend the rules of Council requiring a second reading of the ordinance. The Clerk called the roll. Councilpersons Buckman, Stacey, Czerwonka, Stoller, Weber, Sumner, and Mayor Bryan voted yes. Seven yeases. Motion carried.

Councilman Sumner moved, Councilman Stacey seconded to adopt Ordinance No. 2005-13. In addressing questions from Councilman Sumner, Mr. Thompson explained that the City has decided to continue with IBI's current contract (for electrical inspections in Blue Ash) at least through this year (i.e., the inspection corporation, NIC, will not be performing electrical inspections). Mr. Waltz further explained that most area communities tie their building fees to the County's as it keeps fees uniform and more consistent for area contractors. There being no further discussion, the Clerk called the roll. Councilpersons Stacey, Czerwonka, Stoller, Weber, Sumner, Buckman, and Mayor Bryan voted yes. Seven yeases. Ordinance No. 2005-13 passed.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

City Manager Thompson commented that the Planning Commission recently approved a variation for a sign at the CMC Office Park on the west side of Reed Hartman Highway south of Wendy's. The sign then went to the Board of Zoning Appeals for a variance related to the shape of that sign, since it was not rectangular as the current Zoning Code requires (unless granted a variance). A Board of Zoning Appeals member stated that the Planning Commission overstepped its bounds in regards to its condition of approval requiring additional landscaping, and therefore, in the opinion of that Board member, making the sign about 18 inches too high. Mr. Thompson since checked with the Solicitor regarding this issue, and it has been concluded that the opinion expressed by that Board of Zoning Appeals member was an incorrect interpretation. Given this, the Solicitor has recommended that it would be appropriate for City Council to be the final decision maker regarding this issue.

Vice Mayor Buckman moved, Councilwoman Stoller seconded that the Planning Commission's conditions for approval of that sign for the CMC Office Park on the west side of Reed Hartman Highway south of Wendy's were proper (including its requirement for additional landscaping). A voice vote was taken. All members voted yes. Motion carried. (Approval of this motion by Council hereby negates the point of the Board of Zoning Appeals otherwise indicating inappropriate action by the Planning Commission.)

City Manager Thompson displayed items recently sent to the City by Patrol Officer Mark Ziegler who is currently serving in the Army in Kosovo. Items displayed were a framed American flag that was flown on the Blackhawk helicopter piloted by Chief Warrant Officer Ziegler, along with a certificate expressing appreciation to the City and the Police Department for their support to Mr. Ziegler during his deployment. Council requested that an expression of thanks, to be signed by all Council members, be sent to Mr. Ziegler.

City Manager Thompson commented that Council had mentioned at the last meeting the desire to discuss at tonight's meeting the potential of having more of a work session

structure for designated Council meetings. Mr. Thompson commented that if Council would like to move forward with this idea that he would recommend the first topic to be discussed at a work session be the updated Capital Improvement Plan. After some discussion it was determined that this first work session would be scheduled for Thursday, April 7th, beginning at 7:00PM, and that the second Council meeting in April (normally on April 28th) be cancelled due to the absence of some members who will be traveling with the Sister City delegation. Councilwoman Stoller moved, Councilman Stacey seconded to cancel the April 28th meeting and to establish the first work session on Thursday, April 7, 2005, beginning at 7:00PM. A voice vote was taken. All members voted yes. Motion carried. This work session's agenda will include the topic of the session, and routine items towards the beginning of the agenda, such as roll call. However, even though it will be open to the public, it is not meant to include portions of the meeting such as "Hearings from Citizens."

Assistant City Manager David Waltz commented that even though the City may have received some negative publicity last week due to the announcement that Sara Lee would be moving some employees from Blue Ash (though the news reports were overstated as to this move's overall negative effect), he commented that there is positive economic news in that Neyer will soon break ground on a new building located off Lake Forest Drive near the Modern Office Methods Building (north of Watson Bros. Brewery). He also reminded Council of the success related to the move of Sunny Delight to Blue Ash, which will bring 50 new jobs over the next three years (average salaries being \$110,000 per year). Sunny Delight is also the recent recipient of an award from the Chamber of Commerce. Another recent economic development success was the move of CTI to Blue Ash (with some incentive provided by Blue Ash, to match State tax incentives offered for the project). This relocation will guarantee 50 new jobs over the next few years, with an average salary of \$75,000. Mr. Waltz also commented that the office space vacancy rate in Blue Ash has decreased in the first quarter (to 17%), down from 21% in the fourth quarter of 2004. This vacancy rate statistic is calculated by the commercial real estate industry.

Treasurer/Administrative Services Director Jim Pfeffer commented that tax revenues are up by 7/10% from this time last year. The City is advertising for the replacement of the Tax Commissioner (who retired early this year). He also commented that the Finance Office is preparing for this year's audit effort, and that the Technology Office has been busy with new software and network programs in the Police areas. Regarding the previous discussion of concerns regarding risk management issues related to the City's involvement in the Blue Ash Airport Days event, he commented that he has been working with the Solicitor's office as well as the City's insurance pool (MVRMA). Some issues do need to be resolved with the Airport Days Committee; however, he believes that a common ground can be reached with the cooperation of that committee.

Service Director Denny Albrinck commented that the City will be receiving approximately \$54,000 from a FEMA program related to the fact that Hamilton County had been declared a disaster area after the extremely heavy December 24 – 27th snow and ice. This amount represents 75% of the total estimated expenses related from this inclement weather (estimated to be about \$72,200). Mr. Albrinck complimented Mr. Dole in his office and Finance Officer Sherry Poppe on their efforts to submit and complete this application.

Mr. Albrinck also commented that the City would be reinstating curbside brush pickup by City crews (utilizing the recently acquired chipper). It is likely this service will begin April 1st, with brush pickup schedules likely to be the day following normal Rumpke pickup days for residents.

Parks & Recreation Director Chuck Funk commented that he and his staff have been busy planning this year's schedule of special events. Most of the national and local entertainment has been booked, including a return of the very popular Charlie Daniels Band concert on the afternoon of June 5th (at SummerBratton). He reported that a new sponsor was recruited this year (Toyota) who will be supporting both SummerBratton and the Taste of Blue Ash.

Mr. Funk gave a brief update on the plans for 6171 Interstate Circle, the future home for the Parks & Grounds Maintenance Division's equipment and personnel. The process of renovating the facility continues, and they eagerly await the start of the roof project, with the bid award being finalized tonight. In addressing questions from Council, Mr. Funk reiterated that this project is not expected to run over budget, and that he expects equipment to be moved from the existing leased Kenwood Road space by the end of April. Personnel are expected to be able to occupy the building this fall.

Mr. Funk commented that the problem that occurred last year with the downtown planters, and the lack of substantial flowers and color within those planters, should not happen this year as much work has been done on the irrigation system for those planters. Overall, the appearance of plantings in downtown Blue Ash should be significantly improved this year over last.

In addressing a question from Councilwoman Stoller regarding the sound system in Council Chambers, Mr. Funk commented that Sound Technician Tom Murphy has been reviewing options for this situation, and that he would report back to Council soon with recommendations.

In addressing a question from Councilwoman Stoller, Mr. Albrinck commented that the only real water problem is the Dean residence on Zig Zag, which will be reviewed again this spring, and the project budgeted on Prospect Avenue, which will most likely require acquisition by the City.

In addressing a question from Councilman Czerwonka, Mr. Funk commented that painting of the light poles in downtown Blue Ash (showing wear probably due to the extensive need for road salt to control ice on the roads and sidewalks) is on the Facilities Maintenance list of work to be performed this spring.

Councilman Weber commented that it would be his desire for the City/Council to not get bogged down with the no-smoking ban issue requested of Commissioner Ingram earlier in the meeting. It is Councilman Weber's opinion that Blue Ash has higher priorities, and that the market can take care of this issue without the need for local government to be involved. Councilman Sumner disagreed with Councilman Weber. It is Councilman Sumner's opinion that the market will not take care of this on its own and for Blue Ash not to take a leadership role with this issue would be a disappointment. After some discussion, it seemed the consensus of Council that Blue Ash should take no action regarding this issue.

Councilman Sumner complimented the Administration on the special event financing information contained within the annual reports distributed to Council at the meeting (to be discussed at the next meeting).

Vice Mayor Buckman thanked the Assistant City Manager for the update on the positive news associated with code enforcement of certain properties that had exterior maintenance problems.

Mayor Bryan asked his colleagues on Council to E-mail to him ideas for topics to be discussed at future Council work sessions (and also to prioritize those suggestions). It was determined that these work sessions would include a roll call, the work session (specifying the topic to be discussed), and adjournment.

Mayor Bryan complimented City Manager Marvin Thompson on his efforts over the past year to improve the overall processes of the Blue Ash government. He also complimented Mr. Thompson on initiating the performance review process.

ADJOURNMENT

All items on the agenda having been acted upon, Councilman Sumner moved, Councilman Weber seconded to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote was taken. All members voted yes. The Council meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM.

Rick Bryan, Mayor

Jamie K. Eifert, Clerk of Council

MINUTES WRITTEN BY:

Susan K. Bennett, Deputy Clerk of Council