

BLUE ASH CITY COUNCIL

May 8, 2008

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A regular meeting of the Council of the City of Blue Ash, Ohio, was held on May 8, 2008. Mayor Robert J. Buckman, Jr. called the meeting to order in Council Chambers at 7:00 PM.

OPENING CEREMONIES

Mayor Buckman led those assembled in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councilman Rick Bryan, Mayor Robert Buckman, Councilman Lee Czerwonka, Councilman Henry Stacey, Councilwoman Stephanie Stoller (entered at 7:05PM), Councilman James Sumner, and Vice Mayor Mark Weber

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager David Waltz, Solicitor Mark Vander Laan, Clerk of Council Jamie Eifert, Deputy Clerk of Council Sue Bennett, Treasurer/Administrative Services Director James Pfeffer, Parks & Recreation Director Chuck Funk, Service Director Mike Duncan, Assistant to the City Manager Kelly Osler, and interested citizens

Mayor Buckman appointed Kelly Osler to read the ordinance in its entirety in the rear of Council Chambers.

ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

Councilman Sumner moved, Councilman Stacey 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 April 24, 2008
 - b. Work Session of May 3, 2008
7. COMMUNICATIONS
 - a. Communications to Council - Clerk of Council Jamie K. Eifert
 - b. Reports From Outside Agencies
 - c. Proclamation – Public Works Week, May 18-24, 2008 – Honorable Robert J. Buckman, Jr.
8. HEARINGS FROM CITIZENS
9. COMMITTEE REPORTS
 - a. Finance & Administration Committee, Rick Bryan, Chairperson
 1. Ordinance No. 2008-29, transferring funds
 2. Motion setting 7:00PM, Thursday, July 10, 2008 as public hearing for consideration of the 2009 Tax Budget
10. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS
11. EXECUTIVE SESSION – Property Acquisition
12. ADJOURNMENT”

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Stacey moved, Councilman Sumner seconded to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of April 24, 2008 and the Work Session of May 3, 2008. A voice vote was taken. All members present voted yes. Motion carried.

COMMUNICATIONS

Communications to Council

There were no communications presented at the meeting.

Reports From Outside Agencies

There were no representatives from outside agencies present at the meeting.

Proclamation – Public Works Week, May 18-24, 2008 – Honorable Robert J. Buckman, Jr.

The Mayor asked the Clerk of Council to read the following proclamation in its entirety:

“WHEREAS, public works services in our community are an integral part of our citizens' everyday lives; and

WHEREAS, the support of an understanding and informed citizenry is vital to the efficient operation of public works systems and programs such as water, sewers, streets and highways, sidewalks and bike paths, solid waste collection, snow removal, and waste reduction activities, such as recycling; and

WHEREAS, the health, safety, and comfort of this community greatly depend on these facilities and services; and

WHEREAS, the quality and effectiveness of these facilities, as well as their planning, design, and construction, are vitally dependent upon the efforts and skill of public works personnel and officials; and

WHEREAS, the efficiency of the qualified and dedicated personnel who staff public works departments is materially influenced by the people's attitude and understanding of the importance of the work they perform.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Robert J. Buckman, Jr., Mayor of the City of Blue Ash, Ohio, do hereby proclaim May 18 through May 24, 2008 as PUBLIC WORKS WEEK in Blue Ash, Ohio and call upon all citizens and civic organizations to acquaint themselves with the challenges involved in providing our public works and to recognize the contributions that public works officials and personnel make everyday to our health, safety, and comfort.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto subscribed my name and caused the Seal of The City of Blue Ash, Ohio to be affixed this 8th day of May in the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand and Eight.”

HEARINGS FROM CITIZENS

No citizens wished to address Council.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

“The following offers a brief description of the topics included on the May 8th Council agenda:

9.a.1. Ordinance No. 2008-29 - Transferring funds

Adjustments to the Budget as approved in early January are necessary for two of the City's major projects currently underway. The rather limited entries on the attachment to Ordinance No. 2008-29 refer to the Blue Ash Road project (under Fund #441), as well as the Phase II renovation and expansion of the Recreation Center (under Fund #446).

At the last Council meeting, the final category of work associated with the Rec Center project (Aluminum Glass & Glazing) was awarded as a supplement to the other trades and contracts which were authorized previously under Ordinance No. 2008-16. Because not all of the funding is available

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in the project accounts (primarily composed of bond proceeds and transfers from "Issue 15" reserves), the need exists at this time to increase construction expenditure appropriations so all of those contracts can be encumbered and funding set aside for payment to the contractors as work progresses. The single line entry under "Additional Expenditure Appropriations" (Fund 446) represents the remaining unappropriated balance in the Rec Center Construction Fund that can be recognized at this time.

Clearly, not all of the work associated with the renovation and expansion of the Rec Center will be completed during 2008. Nevertheless, it is proper, under State guidelines, for these funds to be set aside at the time Council awards the contracts and the City Manager executes those documents.

The entries related to Fund 441 for the Blue Ash/Hunt Road project are directly related to the Service Director's explanation at a prior Council meeting that an aging 12-inch waterline under Blue Ash Road needs to be replaced at this time. The plan is to increase the capacity of that line to a 16-inch diameter pipe, and also to provide for an interconnection of that main to the new 36-inch transmission line installed by the Water Works last year. These entries provide for recognizing the revenue that is expected to be received from the Cincinnati Water Works relating to their involvement with this project, as well as an increase in the road construction and expense appropriation. The numbers do not match because at a previous transfer, City Council authorized supplemental construction funding based upon an estimate of the water line cost.

Please direct questions regarding the transfer to the Treasurer.

9.b.2. Motion setting 7:00PM, Thursday, July 10, 2008 as public hearing for consideration of the 2009 Tax Budget

As is customary this time of year, this motion sets the public hearing date for the 2009 Tax Budget for July 10, 2008 at 7:00 PM. It is necessary to hold a public hearing and to thereafter present Council with a resolution for the Budget's acceptance, as has been the practice in the past. A copy of the Tax Budget will be available for review by the public, and Council's copy will be delivered in early July.

Please direct any questions regarding this motion or the tax budget process to the Treasurer."

Finance & Administration Committee, Rick Bryan, Chairperson

Councilman Bryan asked the Clerk to read Ordinance No. 2008-29 by title only.

THEN WAS PRESENTED AND READ BY TITLE ONLY:

ORDINANCE NO. 2008-29

PROVIDING FOR THE TRANSFER OF FUNDS AND
AMENDMENTS WITHIN THE ANNUAL APPROPRIATION
ORDINANCE NO. 2008-3 FOR THE YEAR 2008 (AS SHOWN
ON ATTACHMENT); AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY

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

Councilman Bryan moved, Councilman Sumner seconded to adopt Ordinance No. 2008-29. There being no discussion, the Clerk called the roll. Councilpersons Sumner, Weber, Stacey, Czerwonka, Bryan, and Mayor Buckman voted yes. Six yeses. Ordinance No. 2008-29 passed.

(Councilwoman Stoller entered the meeting at approximately 7:05PM.)

Councilman Bryan moved, Councilman Czerwonka seconded to set 7:00PM, Thursday, July 10, 2008 as public hearing for consideration of the 2009 Tax Budget. A voice vote was taken. All members voted yes. Motion carried.

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MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

City Manager David Waltz introduced Dr. Eric Rademacher of the Institute for Policy Research (IPR) associated with the University of Cincinnati. Mr. Waltz explained that recently the City asked IPR to conduct a citizen survey. He noted that this survey was not necessarily intended to be a follow-up to the survey this organization assisted the City with in 2002. The 2002 survey was more of an overall City service assessment. Mr. Waltz explained that at some point he would be interested in a more direct follow-up to that 2002 survey to gauge citizens' thoughts (and changes in thoughts) on overall City performance.

Dr. Rademacher presented a brief presentation summarizing the results of the citizen survey. He explained that 487 adult Blue Ash citizens (18 years and older) were polled via telephone over a four-day period between March 12 and 16. No cellular phone numbers were called – only landlines -- and the estimated margin of error in the poll is $\pm 4.4\%$. A summary of his presentation and the survey results is below:

- In response to the survey question: "All things considered, how satisfied are you with the quality of life in the City of Blue Ash?", responses were (with 2002 survey results for a similar question shown in parenthesis):
 - Very satisfied: 72.8% (73.2%)
 - Satisfied: 25.9% (24.3%)
 - Dissatisfied: .9% (1.4%)
 - Very dissatisfied: .2% (.7%)
 - Unsure: .2% (.4%)

Dr. Rademacher commented that these results reflect a continued very positive/favorable belief on the overall quality of life perception of citizens.

- Summarization of the response to an open-ended question asking what citizens believe is the most important issue facing the City of Blue Ash, 12% reported airport-related issues/development, 7% reported taxes (including those noting property taxes); 7% reported growth/building up of downtown, 7% reported traffic; and 5% reported management of residential development.
- In response to the question "How does Downtown Blue Ash impact the overall quality of life in Blue Ash ... would you say Downtown Blue Ash has ... a positive impact on the quality of life in Blue Ash, a negative impact on the quality of life in Blue Ash, or makes no difference in the quality of life in Blue Ash?", results were:
 - A positive impact: 75.8%
 - A negative impact: 4.6%
 - No difference: 19%
 - Don't know: .6%
- In response to the question "In the past year, how often would you say you visited Downtown Blue Ash businesses, including restaurants or bars, retail shopping, or service offices ... at least once a day, a few times a week, once a week, a few times a month, rarely, or never?", citizens responded:
 - 14.1% at least once a day
 - 48.9% a few times a week
 - 17.8% once a week
 - 13.3% a few times a month
 - 4.9% rarely

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- .8% never
- .2% didn't know
- Several questions regarding development and land use issues were also asked in the survey. In response to a question regarding how much residents have heard about certain issues, the following responses were received:
 - Development of the airport park: 85.8% have heard "some" or "a great deal"
 - Plans for attracting new residential development in downtown: 56.5% have heard "some" or "a great deal"
 - Plans for attracting new business development in downtown: 43.0% have heard "some" or "a great deal"
 - Downtown Streetscaping: 37.1% have heard "some" or "a great deal"
 - Traffic improvements in Blue Ash: 31% have heard "some" or "a great deal"
- In response to a closed-ended question as to which (of those projects listed) should be the highest priority over the next 10 years, responses included:
 - Development of the airport park: 30.4%
 - Downtown Streetscaping: 7.9%
 - Traffic improvements in Blue Ash: 24.7%
 - Attracting new business development in downtown: 24.1%
 - Attracting new residential development in downtown: 10.1%
 - Don't know: 2.7%
- In summarizing the results of two survey questions asking what they believe should be the City's first priority (question 5, also summarized above) and second priority (question 6), residents answered the following:
 - Development of the airport park: 53.7%
 - Downtown Streetscaping: 21.5%
 - Traffic improvements in Blue Ash: 43.9%
 - Attracting new business development in downtown: 47.4%
 - Attracting new residential development in downtown: 25.5 %
 - Don't know: 3.9%
- Question 10 asked "City of Blue Ash land use planning is designed to create a mix of residential properties, business properties, parks and other public spaces. How satisfied are you with the mix of land use in the City of Blue Ash...." Responses received are summarized (with the 2002 survey results of a similar question shown in parenthesis):
 - Very satisfied: 40.2% (44.5%)
 - Somewhat satisfied: 49.5% (40.4%)
 - Somewhat dissatisfied: 8% (9.4%)
 - Very dissatisfied: 1.7% (3.1%)
 - Don't know: .6% (2.5%)

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- Question 11 asked “Do you think the City of Blue Ash should (1) increase efforts to encourage the development of a mix of residential housing types, (2) keep the level of effort the same, or (3) reduce efforts to encourage the development of a mix of residential housing types?”, residents answered (with the 2002 survey results of a similar question shown in parenthesis):
 - Increase efforts: 35.9% (29.8%)
 - Keep the level of effort the same: 50.6% (57.3%)
 - Reduce efforts: 10% (7.9%)
 - Don’t know: 3.5% (5%)
- Question 9 asked “There is a limited amount of space available for development in Downtown Blue Ash. Which one of the following would you like to see developed in Downtown Blue Ash using the limited space available ... restaurants & bars, retail shopping, service offices, greenspace, or townhomes & condominiums?”. Results are summarized:
 - Restaurants & bars: 40.8%
 - Retail shopping: 26.2%
 - Service offices: 4.6%
 - Greenspace: 16.6%
 - Townhomes & condominiums: 8.3%
 - Don’t know: 3.5%
- In regards to the percent of residents saying they favor City financial assistance for certain downtown-related investment, the results are summarized:
 - For downtown streetscaping, 78.6% say they “strongly favor” or “favor somewhat” City financial assistance towards this
 - To encourage development of new businesses in downtown Blue Ash, 68.4% say they “strongly favor” or “favor somewhat” City financial assistance towards this
 - To encourage residential development in downtown Blue Ash, 47.2% say they “strongly favor” or “favor somewhat” City financial assistance towards this
- In asking about the airport park development, residents were asked what they would like to see Blue Ash first develop ... greenspace, a par 3 golf course, or the performing arts & conference center – results are summarized:
 - Greenspace: 44.2%
 - A par 3 golf course: 10%
 - The performing arts & conference center: 44%
 - Don’t know: 1.8%
- In asking the question: “Suppose the City of Cincinnati decided to no longer operate an airport in Blue Ash. If there was no longer an airport operating in Blue Ash, do you think this would have ... a positive impact on the quality of life in Blue Ash, a negative impact on the quality of life in Blue Ash, or make no difference in the quality of life in Blue Ash?”, residents responded:
 - A positive impact: 15.6%
 - A negative impact: 34.8%

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- Makes no difference: 46.2%
- Don't know: 3.4%
- In asking the question: "As you may know, several Blue Ash neighborhoods are connected physically by roads, walking paths and bike paths. How important do you think it is for the City of Blue Ash to physically connect more Blue Ash neighborhoods to one another ... very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?", residents responded (with 2002 survey results to a similar question shown in parenthesis):
 - Very important: 37.6% (38.2%)
 - Somewhat important: 37.8% (35.3%)
 - Not very important: 16.3% (17.1%)
 - Not at all important: 5.9% (8.9%)
 - Don't know: 2.3% (.6%)
- In answer to the question: "Overall, how would you rate the sense of community in the City of Blue Ash ... excellent, good, fair, or poor?", residents responded (with 2002 survey results to a similar question shown in parenthesis):
 - Excellent: 36.3% (36.7%)
 - Good: 48.2% (47.6%)
 - Fair: 11.5% (11.5%)
 - Poor: 1.9% (2.7%)

Dr. Rademacher offered the following additional comments regarding the survey results:

- In regards to satisfaction with the overall quality of life, Blue Ash remains high and has a strong sense of community.
- Development issues are on the minds of residents (not too much traffic and taxes).
- In regards to the airport park, residents favor development of greenspace and the performing arts & conference center.
- In regards to downtown business development, residents are not just driving through downtown, and the responses do not "disfavor" opportunity with potential mixed use development. Overall, the community indicated they would like more efforts in the areas of business development.

Mr. Waltz summarized that the intent of the survey was to help provide guidance for Council with some of the decisions the City will soon be facing, especially in terms of capital expenditures. It appears that citizens are generally supporting the direction of the City, and he believes the order of the projects to be undertaken will essentially be driven by market conditions. Mr. Waltz commented that he was relatively surprised at the level of strength of support for downtown efforts as well as the strength of support for a performing arts & conference center as a part of the airport park development.

Service Director Mike Duncan gave a brief update on the Blue Ash/Hunt Road project. The Greater Cincinnati Water Works (GCWW) was expected to come in next week to make the final tie in at Cooper/Kenwood Road (with the 36" water line). However, that is no longer the case, and this final tie in will not be done until the second week of June (because GCWW is not certain just how to connect 36" to the Kenwood main as there are other utilities in the way). However, temporary patching to smooth Cooper near Kenwood will be done to assure a smooth surface for the Memorial Day Parade.

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Mr. Waltz commented that the City is in the process of joining the "First Suburbs" consortium – a group of suburbs working towards common issues. The cost to the City for membership is minimal, and the group requires each member community to have representation on their Board of Directors, preferring an elected official. After some discussion, it was determined that the Assistant to the City Manager would provide more information to Council regarding this consortium, including what would be required by that elected official board of directors appointee. After review of that information, Council would then provide future direction to the Administration.

Mr. Waltz explained that though there is nothing confirmed new relating to the airport relocation efforts, there have been rumors that the FAA has not accepted Cincinnati's request for federal funding for relocation of the airport facilities; however, staff is attempting to learn more about this status, and has a meeting scheduled next week which may shed more light.

In response to a question from Councilwoman Stoller, Parks & Recreation Director Chuck Funk commented that the work currently underway at Towne Square (finishing up of the removal of the fountain/sculpture, as well as the gazebo and some landscaped areas to the rear), will be completed by the Memorial Day weekend.

In response to a comment from Councilman Sumner, Mr. Duncan commented that the issue of potential improvements of the footbridge (over Ronald Reagan Highway from the Kenview Hills Subdivision) will include surveying of the area beginning tomorrow. Within a month, the City should be able to grind and perhaps repave areas of concern.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

After all items on the agenda were acted upon, Councilman Sumner moved, Councilman Stacey seconded to convene an Executive Session to discuss matters pertaining to property. The Clerk called the roll. Councilpersons Weber, Stacey, Czerwonka, Bryan, Stoller, Sumner, and Mayor Buckman voted yes. Seven yeases. Motion carried. (Council and the Administration moved to the Lobby Conference room for the Executive Session.)

After matters pertaining to property were discussed, Councilman Bryan moved, Councilwoman Stoller seconded to convene to the regular meeting. A voice vote was taken. All Council members voted yes. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

All items on the agenda having been acted upon, Councilman Stacey moved, Councilman Sumner seconded to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote was taken. All members voted yes. The Council meeting was adjourned at approximately 8:24 PM.

Robert J. Buckman, Jr., Mayor

Jamie K. Eifert, Clerk of Council

MINUTES WRITTEN BY:

Susan K. Bennett, Deputy Clerk of Council