

## **MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING, CHEVIOT, OHIO**

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October 14, 2008

The Public Hearing on the proposed Public Works Fee was called to order at 6:35 P.M. The following were found in attendance:

Mayor	Samuel D. Keller
President of Council	Deborah M. McKinney
Law Director	Mark G. Waters
Safety Service Director	Steven O. Neal
Council 1 <sup>st</sup> Ward	Ryan T. Zech
Council 2 <sup>nd</sup> Ward	James Babey
Council 3 <sup>rd</sup> Ward	James F. Sunderhaus
Council 4 <sup>th</sup> Ward	Greg J. Stautberg
Council at Large	Kathleen S. Zech
Council at Large	Dennis T. Dinkelacker
Council at Large	Steven L. Braun
Auditor	Theresa Ciolino-Klein
Assistant Auditor	Patty Henry

President McKinney explained the format of the Public Hearing to all in attendance and then turned the meeting over to Mr. Stautberg. Mr. Stautberg then explained to everyone the City's current financial situation and why the City feels the need to enact a Public Works fee.

Peggy Sullivan, owner of the IGA on North Ben Road, informed Council that her business currently has trash picked up three times a week, which under the new fee schedule will cost her \$300 per month or \$3,600 per year. She wanted to know why in 2005 under a similar temporary public works fee the cost was only \$385 per year, adding that this price structure currently makes the City's trash pickup more expensive than a private contractor providing the same service. She also requested that the CWCA have more input on this plan rather than the City just releasing the pricing structure on its own. Mr. Neal informed everyone that the reason the price has increased so much is due to cost increases to the City from Rumpke, but added that nothing is set in stone at this time.

Ed Mormile of North Bend Road said that he does not have a problem with the residential fee of \$10 per month, but wanted to know why a six unit building would receive a discounted rate. There was much discussion. Mr. Mormile also added that he would like the option to pay for the entire year in advance.

Robert Fay of Woodbine Avenue asked if the residents would have an opportunity to vote on the proposed Public Works Fee. Mayor Keller stated that this fee is only temporary for a period of one year and added that the City is looking at many possibilities for the future including a levy that residents will be able to vote on.

A resident named Richard from Trevor Avenue wanted to know the details of what has already been cut back. Mayor Keller informed him that the City has not purchased a new police cruiser for the last two years, though they are supposed to be replaced every four to six years; that one life squad is eight years past the date it was supposed to be replaced; that the newest fire truck is currently 13 years past the date it was to be replaced; that each line item in the budget that can be cut has been cut and that some have been eliminated altogether; that all "luxury" items have been eliminated; that the City is only meeting the State minimum requirements for training for employees and nothing more due to costs; and that the overall budget for the Public Works Department has been cut as much as possible. Mayor Keller added that the cost of road salt for the winter has increased by 164% (which will limit overall snow removal) this year; the cost of street resurfacing has doubled over the last four years; additional fuel surcharges have been incurred by the City; and the truck used for leaf pickup is from 1974 with a motor from a 1924 Jeep.

Bill Race of Miami Court stated that he had a problem with the City expending additional funds for street light upgrades while the City is in a financial crisis. Mr. Neal informed him that the project he is referring to is for traffic signal replacement and not street lights and that this is mostly being paid for by grants. Mr. Stautberg added that there have been increases in the costs of health insurance, gas, and employee raises that are beyond Council's control.

Peggy Sullivan asked if owners of vacant homes are able to opt out of the fee. Mayor Keller informed her that though some business did opt out, no houses have at this time. Mayor Keller added that the schedule for business fees will be reviewed. Ms. Sullivan then asked if businesses that have opted out will be allowed to opt back in. Mr. Neal stated that the City would allow businesses to opt back in.

Mr. Race stated that he feels that the owner of a vacant property should still be assessed the fee as he didn't believe anyone should get a free ride. Mr. Neal said that he agrees, but since the fee will be collected via resident's Cincinnati Water Works bills, he wasn't sure what would happen if the water service at a residence was stopped. A representative from Cincinnati Water Works, who is also a Cheviot resident, stated that a minimum fee is always assessed; adding that all Cincinnati departments are suffering the same as Cheviot and that she felt the fee was fair due to the level of service that the City provides. Mr. Sunderhaus added that police overtime and walk beats have been cut, in addition to salaries, to make up for the projected budget shortfall.

Kevin Leidecker, owner of NYPD Pizza on Harrison Avenue, asked if a recycling program could be used to help offset the amount of garbage picked up and thus the costs of doing business with Rumpke. Mr. Neal said the City is looking into a recycling program as an option.

Chris Baker, owner of Second Street Saloon on Harrison Avenue, stated that she felt that the \$10 residential fee is a fair price, but would like the business community to have more input. President McKinney reminded everyone that all budget meetings are open to the public. Mr. Neal added that he felt many businesses could get by on one pickup per week instead of two, and asked Ms. Baker to advise the business community to inform the City if they would like to change their schedule.

Mrs. Zech informed the Public that Money Market Magazine has recently named Cheviot as one of the 100 most affordable cities to live in and that the city was a contender for the 100 best places to live, partly because of the quality of the City Services. Mrs. Zech stated that this temporary fee will allow the City more time to find a permanent solution to the problems of funding these services. Mr. Dinkelacker reminded residents that while many cities have disposal limits on how much trash can be picked up in a week, Cheviot does not. Ms. Baker said that she understands, but wants to see if it is possible that the business community can be given a similarly fair deal as the residents.

Mr. Neal informed the public that the city can now take refrigerators and freezers businesses and residents wish to dispose of thanks to a grant used for training our Public Works employees on how to remove Freon from these appliances, and added that Cheviot was one of the first communities to be cleaned up following the recent wind storm.

Mayor Keller stated that the way the billing is currently set up, fees may be assessed to the owner of the building that a business in is, but informed everyone that Cincinnati Water Works does allow for billing to be split among tenants of a building. Mayor Keller said this will need to be looked into when there is a building with multiple tenants.

Kate Kinney of Bruestle Avenue asked how this was allowed to happen. Mr. Neal explained that part of the reason was that earning taxes collected by the City have not risen at the same pace as costs incurred by the City and cited several examples. Mr. Stautberg added that the City does not want to collect any more than necessary.

Mr. Ralin commended the Public Works department for keeping the truck used for leaf collection running so long and added that the City has always provided excellent service with the limited resources it has available.

Mr. Mormile stated that he feels there has been a lack of communication with the business community, adding that business are what keeps the city running and that he'd like to see the City do a better job of working with the business community.

Bill Clark of Alta Vista Avenue asked how much the Cincinnati Water Works is charging the City to collect the proposed fee. There was much discussion. Mr. Stautberg stated that the cost is very high, and apologized to those in the business community who feel this has not been handled in the best way possible.

Mr. Leidecker informed Council that he pays a similar fee at two of the other business locations he owns and stated that the proposed fee here in Cheviot is higher than his other two locations. He expressed concern because he would like to see the fee in Cheviot be more in line with what he pays at his other two locations. There was much discussion.

The public hearing was adjourned at 7:40 P.M.

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Ryan T. Zech  
Clerk of Council , Pro-Tem

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Deborah M. McKinney  
President of Council