

**MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
FEBRUARY 1, 2020  
Auditorium**

**Present:** Councilmembers Bullock, Litten, Neff, O'Malley, Rader, Shachner

**Also:** Clerk Bach, Deputy Clerk Lascu, at-large applicants and several members of the public

**Call to Order:** 9:02 a.m.

President O'Malley called the meeting to order and introduced the agenda, which consisted of candidate interviews for the vacant at-large Council position. The interviews were conducted as follows:

**Steve Skantzios Interview**

Mr. Skantzios delivered an opening statement that highlighted his experiences as a lifelong Lakewood resident, work as an electrician, and helping with his family's small business which is based in Lakewood. He noted that he has been coming to Council meetings for the last 6 years and has remained involved with his union.

In response to Councilmember Rader's question about how cities should be taking on sustainability and global climate change, Mr. Skantzios indicated that Lakewood has a history of being an adaptable community and that it can continue to make changes moving forward.

Vice President Litten asked Mr. Skantzios, if selected, whether he would run for the position again in 2 years and what he envisions are the 2-3 things that are important for Lakewood to work on over the next 2 years. Mr. Skantzios indicated that he was unsure at the moment, wanting to defer to what the community needs, but stated a desire to run for the position if selected. He added that there are major projects on the horizon for Lakewood and that he would like to help play a role in seeing that they affect the city positively for the next 20-30 years.

In response to Councilmember Neff's question about the most significant asset he brings to Council, Mr. Skantzios spoke about his strong work ethic, good listening skills, and knowledge of the construction industry.

Council President O'Malley inquired about Mr. Skantzios' perspective as a small business owner and what that has taught him over the years. Mr. Skantzios noted his ability to communicate with residents of a variety of backgrounds, which he cultivated at his family's restaurant.

Mr. Skantzios then asked Councilmembers what their priorities are over the next few years. President O'Malley indicated that working on the city's sewer system and maintaining strong financial footing as a municipality will be major priorities for the city. Vice President Litten added that managing growth and development in thoughtful ways will be important as well.

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### **Laura Rodriguez-Carbone Interview**

Candidate Laura Rodriguez-Carbone made an opening statement, stating that she recently ran a campaign for the ward 1 seat during which she heard from many residents about their thoughts on the future direction of the City. She summarized her various roles in public service over the past twenty years. She highlighted her strength in reaching out to diverse communities and the unique perspective she could provide as a Latina.

In response to a question from Councilmember Rader about what cities should do to become more sustainable, Ms. Rodriguez-Carbone recommended that the City empower the public to be stewards of the environment through recycling and other means and to serve as a good role model.

In response to a question from President O'Malley asking what unique qualities she would bring to the body of Council, Ms. Rodriguez-Carbone highlighted her ethnicity as a Latina, her work in underserved communities, and her background seeking out and delivering grant funding.

In response to a question from Vice President Litten asking if she will run for election if appointed to the seat and what she believes Council's priorities should be, Ms. Rodriguez-Carbone replied that she plans to run for the at-large Council seat regardless of whether or not she is appointed and that she has begun her campaign. She stated that she feels very strong about Lakewood and its future and plans to be as involved as possible. She remarked that if appointed her focus would be on human services, public transportation, and the City's sewers.

Councilmember Shachner referenced a political forum in which Ms. Rodriguez-Carbone was asked if a losing candidate should be appointed to Council. At that forum Ms. Rodriguez-Carbone stated that such a candidate should not be appointed. Ms. Rodriguez-Carbone stated that her situation is unique since she qualified in her primary election.

Ms. Rodriguez-Carbone thanked Council for their consideration and stated that she will remain active in the community and would like to be a resource to Council.

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### **Nora Katzenberger Interview**

In an opening statement, Ms. Katzenberger highlighted her personal history as a renter and homeowner in Lakewood, noting that she was inspired to apply through her involvement with Lakewood schools. She highlighted her leadership ability and long history as a communications leader and fundraiser, having held positions with the Bank of New York, New York University, University Hospitals, and her current position as a web creative manager for Progressive Auto Insurance. She has been involved with Lakewood Schools PTA, serving as its president at one point, and worked to reinstate a 5<sup>th</sup> grade maturation unit that was no longer being taught. She helped form a partnership with the Cleveland Clinic and helped to insure students were receiving that educational component. She also serves as the campaign manager for the upcoming school levy, where she manages a group of volunteers and connects with voters.

Councilmember Rader asked Ms. Katzenberger how a municipality can combat climate change and how the city could keep young people as residents who eventually grow their families here,

referencing her experience as renter and eventual homeowner. Ms. Katzenberger noted how the city can use natural solutions, such as staggering plating of trees, to combat climate change and also noted how investing in alternative forms of energy and improving recycling programs are important. She stated that engaging young folks in public service helps retain them as residents or brings them back to the community after college.

Vice President Litten inquired as to whether Ms. Katzenberger would run for Council in two years and what she believes Council's priorities should be over the next couple years. She indicated she would run for a Council seat, and referenced her current experience running a campaign in Lakewood. She believed Council's priorities should be establishing a strong partnership with Lakewood schools, engaging local business with the non-profit community, affordable housing, and looking at what structures the community has to support elderly individuals to age in place.

Councilmember Bullock thanked Ms. Katzenberger for her service and work on the levy campaign.

In response to a question from Councilmember Shachner regarding what priorities she sees the community having, as a member of the CAC, Ms. Katzenberger stated that families needing childcare credits, reprioritization of street repaving, and continuing to support Lakewood Alive all are important topics.

In conclusion, Ms. Katzenberger thanked Council for the interview process and transparency. She noted that she would like to make Council business more easily digestible for citizens. Council President O'Malley that Council was working on that as well.

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### **Kevin Dugan Interview**

Candidate Kevin Dugan made an opening statement, highlighting his roles as a coach and volunteer with the schools. He expressed a love of Lakewood and appreciation for its parks, location, schools, and safety services. He expressed a desire to be part of a group that maintains the City in a strong position for the next generation.

In response to a question from President O'Malley about how his role as a firefighter translates to a councilmember, Mr. Dugan stated that the roles are similar because they require collaboration and cooperation. He noted that firefighters are highly trusted in communities because they show up, listen, and don't leave until the job is done. He would bring these skills and abilities to Council.

In response to a question from Councilmember Rader about what cities should do to become more sustainable, Mr. Dugan responded that the City can continue to work with businesses to reduce plastic and provide more information about recycling.

In response to a question from Vice President Litten asking if he will run for election if appointed to the seat and what he believes Council's priorities should be, Mr. Dugan replied that he would probably run if appointed. He stated that Council's priorities should be infrastructure and the aging sewer system. He noted that the City should attempt to solve some of its infrastructure issues using its existing workforce.

In response to a question from Councilmember Neff asking him what unique qualities he would bring to the body of Council, Mr. Dugan responded that he would bring his perspective as lifelong resident and member of a large family.

At the invitation of President O'Malley, Mr. Dugan made concluding remarks, stating his belief that if Council "gets out there" face to face and helps solve resident problems that it increases overall trust in the body.

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### **Lindsey Grdina Interview**

In an opening statement, Ms. Grdina indicated that despite being born and raised in Rocky River, she moved to Lakewood as a renter as soon as she possibly could, ultimately marrying a Lakewood resident and settling in the city when they were looking to start their family. Her priorities for the city include maintaining and developing affordable housing, promoting sustainable development, continuing to make Lakewood a multi-modal city, maintaining the city's parks, increasing pathways to small business ownership, and maintaining economic and human capital diversity. She shared that she is a family law attorney and is no stranger to contentious arguments, negotiating, and consensus building. She stated that she believes Lakewood's best days are ahead of it.

Councilmember Rader commented that Ms. Grdina had run a great, positive campaign and through it, understands her commitment to the environment and sustainability. He inquired as to how the city should go about being economically diverse and vibrant. Ms. Grdina stated that through the CAC, the city should be making an effort to recruit women and minority owner small businesses. She also noted that through her work on the CAC, funding for the childcare credit increased every year she was on the committee.

Vice President Litten asked whether Ms. Grdina would run for Council in 2 years and what her priorities for Council would be over the next couple years. She indicated that she would run again in 2 years and that her priorities align with the city's 2020 core budget goals. She noted plans to introduce legislation that further preserves the tree canopy and pledged to work on resident retention, highlighting the need to preserve space for renters. She also expressed support for finding better ways for seniors to age in place and boost the city's unencumbered reserves.

Councilmember Shachner noted during the Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus Candidates night that a question was asked whether each candidate believed if a councilperson should be appointed despite losing an election. He asked Ms. Grdina how she answered that question. Ms. Grdina indicated that she believes someone in that position should have an opportunity, as it would not be the best use of city money to host a special election. She added that it would be a false narrative to say that she would not be adequately representative, as she did not make it out of her race' primary. Councilmember Shachner also asked, what insight she might have into the community from her time serving on the CAC. Ms. Grdina indicated that the experience allowed her to take a macro level view of the city's master vision and break it down into micro level views. She noted that Lakewood's job is to deliver essential services that promote a high quality of life, adding that the city does a great job but can always do a little bit more.

President O'Malley noted Ms. Grdina's unique experiences and asked her to speak more about dealing with disputes, especially those amongst neighbors. Ms. Grdina stated that through her experiences as an attorney and campaigner she has come to understand that most people want to be heard. She was able to acquire soft skills while putting herself through law school working at bars and restaurants. By listening to people's complaints, she can get to the root of the problem and resolve issues in a non-confrontational format.

In closing remarks, Ms. Grdina thanked Council for the opportunity, noting her father's passing at the beginning of this January. Her father dedicated much of his life to bettering the lives of others and she expressed a desire to continue to do so in hers as well.

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### **Tom Einhouse Interview**

Candidate Tom Einhouse made an opening statement highlighting the various professional and civic experiences and skills he would bring with him to the role including service on the Planning Commission, Board of Education, and Board of Zoning Appeals. He remarked that he has gained insight into the community and has had experience working with diverse groups over the years. He expressed a desire to take the lessons from the past and apply them to the future, work collaboratively with others and get things done.

In response to a question from Councilmember Rader about what cities should do to become more sustainable, Mr. Einhouse discussed the City's stock of historic century homes and how sustainability and historic preservation can go together. He also spoke about transportation, recycling, renewable energy and parks and recreation. He expressed concern that sustainable energy is such a small part of the national economy and expressed interest in bringing it more to the forefront locally.

In response to a question from Vice President Litten asking if he will run for re-election if appointed to the seat and what he believes Council's priorities should be, Mr. Einhouse responded that he is planning to run for the at-large seat. He identified sustainable budgets and economic development as priorities for Council as well as the proposed new community center at Cove church and the goals of Live Well Lakewood.

In response to a question by Vice President Litten asking about his role in the budgeting process with the school board, Mr. Einhouse replied that school board members could only make sound decisions based on good information from the Treasurer. Board members would have to give direction about the type of information they needed and always understand the forecast.

In response to a question from Councilmember Neff asking him what unique qualities he would bring to the body of Council, Mr. Einhouse identified his ability diverse background together and apply it. Additionally, he pointed to his skills in communications, having empathy, and a vision about what is right for the future of Lakewood.

Councilmember Bullock applauded Mr. Einhouse for his professional successes at Playhouse Square and asked him to weigh in on the City's cycling infrastructure.

In response, Mr. Einhouse gave the City's bikeways a high score for initiative and intention but an overall "middling score." He spoke about the need to educate folks who are not on cyclists about sharing the road.

Noting Mr. Einhouse's service on BZA & Planning Commission, President O'Malley asked him to draw conclusions about the City's processes and to remark on what we do well and what can be improved.

Mr. Einhouse stated that the process can only be as good as the Planning Department. He went on to praise the City's Planning Department as one of the best, concluding that if you have the right people in the right place you can get to the best solutions.

At the invitation of President O'Malley, Mr. Einhouse made concluding remarks, stating that he is at an excellent point in his career and life to serve on Council and that he would do so with the full support of his employer. He thanked Council for the opportunity.

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### **Sarah Kepple Interview**

In a brief opening statement, Ms. Kepple thanked Council for the opportunity and noted that her experiences as an entrepreneur, long-time resident, and community organizer would enable her to bring a unique perspective to Council.

Councilmember Rader asked what Ms. Kepple would do to address climate change on the local level of government. She noted that the largest issue is Lakewood's sewer systems and cited an opportunity for the city to be a leader on the issue given recent EPA rollbacks. She stated that the city is moving in a good direction with making car charging publicly available and also expressed a desire to increase the use of solar energy in city and residential properties.

Councilmember Rader then asked how she would help increase outreach and communication with the public. Ms. Kepple indicated that Council has made strides in making video recordings of the meetings available to the public and that efforts could be made to make the information more easily understandable to the public, while also pushing news out via social media.

Vice President Litten asked whether Ms. Kepple would be running for Council in 2 years if appointed to the position or not, and what she thinks Council's priorities should be over the next couple years. Ms. Kepple indicated that she is looking to move into elected service and took longer to deliberate on the matter to ensure that she had folks in place to carry on her activism work. In terms of priorities, she added that there should be focus on sewer repairs, fixing One Lakewood Place and the Intergenerational Center, and making sure the city has pathways in place to make sure people of color and lower income are welcomed in Lakewood. She expounded, stating that people of color are more affected by income disparity and that the diversity of the city is one of the things that attracted her to the area. She also proposed celebrating Indigenous People's Day instead of Columbus Day.

Councilmember Rader noted that Cleveland City Council's balance was recently thrown off with a female member stepping down there, and he asked Ms. Kepple how Lakewood feels about placing a woman in Lakewood's vacant seat. Ms. Kepple indicated that many efforts in the city

are led by women, and that while the community wants the best candidate, appointing a woman would send a good message.

President O'Malley referenced Ms. Kepple's work on a No Hate in Lakewood Rally she helped organize in response to an incident on Belle Ave., highlighting the positive message that it sent. He asked how the city could be more inclusive, noting that his ward has more refugees living in it than any other square mile in Cuyahoga County. She expressed her thanks for Council's assistance with the rally and proposed making Indigenous People's Day a voting holiday. She stated the need for Council to be a welcoming committee for refugees and asylum seekers. She referred to examples of work being done at the Lakewood libraries, such as bilingual story times and increasing access to information through multiple languages.

Councilmember Bullock asked how Ms. Kepple would approach the balance of keeping the ship sailing steadily with the city versus taking new approaches to problems. She stated that the city can do both, looking at existing successes and bring more resources and idea to them.

In her closing remarks, Ms. Kepple noted that it took awhile for her to make sure that this opportunity would be the right fit, and that we need people of good moral fiber involved in government. She stated that she is that kind of person and that she has shown that she can get things done.

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### **Mark Schneider Interview**

Candidate Mark Schneider made opening remarks, expressing a belief in his ability to make a difference. He walked through highlights of his career, focusing on the work he has done fighting for vulnerable populations, equality, and dignity for all. He also mentioned his three years of service on the CAC and experience at the state, local and county levels of government.

In response to a question from Councilmember Rader about what cities should do to become more sustainable, Mr. Schneider spoke about his involvement in efforts to bring sustainable energy sources to the region while in the statehouse. As a councilmember he expressed a desire and willingness to work with multiple City departments to find sustainable solutions.

President O'Malley spoke about Lakewood's reputation as a diverse and welcoming community and asked Mr. Schneider how the City can continue to uphold this reputation.

Mr. Schneider spoke about voting for the equality bill in the state house and of suffering political consequences for this. He expressed willingness to "stick his neck out" for his beliefs. He spoke about his role investigating child abuse and neglect. He stated that this experience has provided him with a unique perspective of those on the margins. He expressed a commitment to reaching out as a councilmember and improving communications from the City.

In response to a question from Vice President Litten asking if he will run for re-election if appointed to the seat and what she believes Council's priorities should be, Mr. Schneider replied that he will definitely run if appointed and that he intends to run regardless of whether or not he is appointed. He identified safety, fiscal prudence, affordability, and serving seniors as what he believes should be Council's priorities.

In response to a question from Councilmember Bullock about the breadth of his experience in municipal law, Mr. Schneider replied that he advises all city boards and commissions, coordinates with outside counsel on labor contracts, updates officials on litigation and provides all-purpose trouble shooting. His approach is to anticipate issues and prepare for efficiency.

At the invitation of President O'Malley, Mr. Schneider made concluding remarks expressing his belief that government must set an example and make its residents proud. He expressed a belief in consensus building and a desire to help Council be stronger and find consensus.

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### **Ray Cushing Interview**

In an opening statement, Mr. Cushing noted that he has been working with the city for quite some time and highlighted his work on the Audit Committee as chair. He referenced the 2007 Structural Balance Taskforce Report that he helped create, adding that he has lived his whole life in Lakewood and sent his kids through the Lakewood school system. He stated he is interested in the financial stability of the city moving forward and would like to take the city's assets to the next level. He serves as the treasurer of Nordson Corporation, where he is responsible for the management of the company's pensions along with 3-4 million square feet of property that the company owns. He worked with the school board in the 1990s and has given back through foundations, while also assisting non-profit organizations in times of transition. He gave an example of his assistance during Nature's Binn Cornucopia restructuring. He indicated that his goal on Council is to ensure that the city stays safe, secure, and financially sound.

Councilmember Rader noted that the only reason why the city is able to consider sustainability is due to the work of people like Mr. Cushing who have gotten the city to solid financial ground. He asked Mr. Cushing what he would do on Council to move the city forward in addressing the effects of climate change. Mr. Cushing indicated that continuing to invest in charging stations for electric cars, bioswales, LED lights, and continuing to add more fiber should all be priorities.

Councilmember Litten inquired as to whether Mr. Cushing plans on running for a Council seat if appointed or not, and from a finance perspective, what the top 2-3 concerns are for Lakewood over the next few years. Mr. Cushing indicated he would run, and that even though he is not a political guy, would bring experience in finance, consensus building, and is a team player. His concerns are regarding Lakewood's contracts and investments. He indicated that Lakewood is a city in a big economic system and that despite being resilient, its economy would be impacted in the event of an economic downturn. He noted that the economy is doing well and so is Lakewood, adding that he thinks the city is very well run and has benefitted from the great leadership of former Mayor Summers and former Director of Finance Jen Pae. He stated that Council's goal is to keep doors of opportunity open and that his skillset would be to asset with forecasting, looking at the city's debt, and bringing a financial view.

Councilmember Bullock thanked Mr. Cushing for his service on the Audit Committee and asked how much of Council's job is to function as an innovator vs. caretaker. Mr. Cushing stated that the city's goal is to nail down the production side of its business so that it can innovate. He added that the goal of Council is to take the city to the next level, which requires innovation and

creativity. Council serves as the counterweight to the administration, ensuring that the city is running correctly.

In closing remarks, Mr. Cushing stated that Lakewood is a unique and fantastic place with great neighborhoods. It is walkable, safe, and secure and he would like to do whatever he can to ensure that those things remain.

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### **Virgil Wahome Interview**

Candidate Virgil Wahome thanked Council for the opportunity to interview and highlighted that he is a resident since 1998 and plans on staying in Lakewood.

Councilmember Rader noted that he visited Mr. Wahome's block club party and observed that his neighbors clearly look up to him as a leader. He asked Mr. Wahome what cities can do to be more sustainable. Mr. Wahome encouraged taking a close look at the region's systems of transportation to reduce carbon emissions. He also recommended education, particularly of the next generation.

In response to a question from Vice President Litten asking if he will run for re-election if appointed and what he believes Council's priorities should be, Mr. Wahome stated that it is possible he would run for election. He urged Council to focus on downtown development, filling empty storefronts and taking ideas from other communities and molding them to Lakewood's strengths.

Noting Mr. Wahome's changing neighborhood on Madison Ave., President O'Malley asked him if the neighborhood has experienced any "growing pains" of development. Mr. Wahome identified problems with speeding and pedestrian safety as a result of the changes. He advocated for speed bumps and traffic calming strategies as well as sustainable approaches to building renovations.

He engaged Council in a brief discussion about its plans, priorities, and the issue of tax abatements.

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President O'Malley made a motion to approve the minutes from the previous Committee of the Whole meeting, which was seconded by Vice President Litten.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:08 p.m.

## **Tom Einhouse Experience Summary**

### Professional

1980 to present – Playhouse Square, Vice President of Facilities and Capital

Owner's representative on the full implementation of \$200,000,000 of improvements including historic restoration/preservation, tenant improvements and public right of way improvements.

1992 to present – Licensed Realtor, with 8 years of residential experience and 20 years of commercial leasing experience

2008 to present – Certified fitness instructor, specializing in indoor cycling and rowing and certified for TRX

### Civic Engagement

Board of Zoning Appeals – Full term plus one year, concluded term as chair

Planning Commission – Full term, concluded as chair

School Board – Two full terms. Leadership role in levies and bond issues

Cleveland Restoration Society – Honorary Life Trustee

LAND studio – Trustee

Downtown Cleveland Improvement District – Board Chair

### Education

Lakewood High graduate

Baldwin Wallace College – BA in Business, with minor in sociology

Continuing education in fields related to interests

### Personal

Loving life in Lakewood with my wife Cindy and our sons Ben and Tim

I am committed to and passionate about service to this amazing, diverse and dynamic community. I have learned from lessons of the past and I embrace the potential of the future.

I am at an excellent point in my life that will allow me to serve with the time and skills needed to be successful as Lakewood City Council person.