

**MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**  
**May 13, 2019**  
**Auditorium**

**Present:** Councilmembers Anderson, Bullock, George, Litten, O’Leary, O’Malley & Rader

**Also Present:** Mayor Summers, Human Services Gelsomino, Urban Designer Allison Hennie, Finance Director Pae, Chief Assistant Law Director Swallow, Planning Director Sylvester, Deputy Clerk Nick Lascu, Clerk Bach and four members of public

**Call to Order:** 5:38 p.m.

**RESOLUTION 9069-19 A RESOLUTION to take effect immediately provided it receives the affirmative vote of at least two thirds of the members of Council, or otherwise to take effect and be in force after the earliest period allowed by law, authorizing the Mayor and Director of Law to enter into a purchase agreement with Cove United Methodist Church *fka* Detroit Avenue Methodist Church Inc., an Ohio non-profit corporation, owner of the property located at 12525 Lake Avenue, Lakewood, Ohio (PPN 312-28-006), and to execute all documents necessary to effectuate the purchase and sale according to the terms of that agreement.**

Director Sylvester remarked that tonight’s presentation follows upon a discussion held two weeks ago in Committee of the Whole on this topic. Since then, the Planning Department has received questions from councilmembers and responded via email. He directed the Committee’s attention to an updated substitute version that was distributed.

Ms. Swallow explained the substitute version stating that in the exhibit provided at the last meeting is included but with the funding for remediation removed.

Director Sylvester reviewed that the primary purpose for the proposed purchase is to build an underground water storage tank, consistent with the City’s Integrated Wet Weather Improvement Plan submitted to the EPA. The future use of the church structure is a secondary consideration. Evaluation of the structure for Human Services purposes will require significant work that can not be undertaken unless the City owns the property.

Mayor Summers emphasized that the letter of intent signed with Cove Church has a short timeframe and that all of the questions surrounding the use of the Church can not be answered in this timeframe.

President O’Leary expressed his comfort with moving forward with the sale based on the storm water needs alone.

Councilmember O’Malley remarked that the creation of a senior/community center at the property is a very important consideration in his approval of the project. He noted that the property is located on prime real estate and multiple developers have expressed interest in it.

President O’Leary remarked that while the secondary purpose of a community center is compelling that he is comfortable moving forward based on the storm water management potential of the site. He expressed his view that ten years from now, the City will not be better positioned to more cheaply acquire the land needed for this project.

Councilmember Litten stated that he would support the purchase for either reason separately and that both projects alone justify the purchase. He asked if the use of the property as a community center can be enshrined in the purchasing agreement somehow.

The administration emphasized that the Letter of Intent specifies closing by June 30<sup>th</sup> and so Council will need to act by May 20<sup>th</sup> to meet that deadline. The Mayor framed the outstanding questions regarding the potential community center, noting that the City will eventually do a cost analysis to compare the costs of demolishing the church, rehabbing the church, or demolishing and rebuilding a community center at the site.

Councilmember Rader expressed support for the proposed purchase for both its storm water management potential as well as its potential to serve as a community center. He asked for clarification regarding the deed restriction.

Councilmember O’Malley clarified his comments to articulate that he supports the project for stormwater management use and wants to be certain that the City is serious about pursuing a community center on the site.

The administration explained that the deed restriction entitles the City to sell the property but that any gain the City receives must be split with the church.

In response to a request by Councilmember Anderson, the administration discussed the progress of getting the City’s IWWIP approved by the EPAs. The Mayor indicated that the plan has been received favorably. On June 6<sup>th</sup> the EPA will visit Lakewood and invest in learning more about the proposals. In June 19<sup>th</sup> Mayor Summers will meet with the U.S. EPA in DC. He noted that the EPA Region 5 regulators in Chicago are the toughest audience so far.

Councilmember Anderson questioned whether the plan to purchase Cove Church is risky because it will take place before the EPA accepts the IWWIP.

Mayor Summers assured Council that the engineering and data are on point and that the only objection of the EPA was that the City wasn’t moving fast enough or doing more. The earliest that the IWWIP will be approved is August.

Councilmember Bullock remarked that he looks favorably on the purchase and is rooting for a rehab over new construction. He suggested that it would not be a loss even if the City purchased the property and later re-sold it. Re-selling it would allow the City to attach certain restrictions to it. He remarked that the purchase would be a signal to EPA that the City is taking action toward Clean Water Act compliance.

Director Sylvester shifted focus to the potential use of the church as a community center and discussed the advantages of the location and site for this purpose such as ample parking, access to green space, proximity to the Gold Coast and low-moderate income census tracts. Director Gelsomino expressed excitement about the possibility of seniors doing gardening, setting up chicken coops and other outdoor activities at the site.

Director Sylvester explained that before this opportunity arose, the City was strategizing for a brand-new human services building. It concluded that 15,000 square feet would be required, which is about the same as Cove Church provides. A new building of this size was estimated to be approximately \$3.9 million. If Cove Church is not used as a community center the City's other options would be to lease property within the City at approximately \$300,000 per year or to renovate existing Human Services buildings.

In response to a question by a councilmember, Mayor Summers explained why he had previously considered the Community Health Center on Belle Ave. as a possible location for Human Services, and why he later changed his mind.

Councilmember Anderson pointed out that a more detailed analysis of the costs and benefits of the different senior center options should include the current maintenance costs at the Lawther Center and the Division of Youth as well as the possible advantages of selling those properties to a private developer.

In response to a councilmember's question, Director Gelsomino discussed how a shift in location of the senior center may impact seniors. She stated that the majority of seniors who arrive at the center drive themselves or utilize the City's transportation. Locating near the Gold Coast could draw in new seniors to visit.

Director Sylvester walked Council through a flow chart mapping the decision points regarding the proposed purchase and potential community center use. Urban Designer Allison Hennie clarified that renovating Cove Church would take approximately the same amount of time as building a new structure. Director Sylvester stated that the next steps will take place immediately if Council approves the purchase on May 20<sup>th</sup>.

In response to a question by a councilmember, Mayor Summers concluded that forgoing this opportunity would require the City to identify multiple parcels for sale in the north east corner of the City that would be large enough to hold the proposed storage tank. Alternative options are not expected to be any cheaper.

Director Pae explained that if council proceeds with the purchase that the administration would later return for contracting authority related to abatement.

Councilmember George voiced support for the purchase.

Councilmember Bullock asked that the mature trees on the site be considered and prioritized.

Motion by President O’Leary, seconded by Vice President Anderson to recommend adoption of substitute Resolution 9069-19.

All members voted in favor. Motion passed.

**Planning Department Development Update**

Director Sylvester provided an update on One Lakewood Place, stating that it was approved by Planning Commission in May after submitting a 100 page submission. ABR is very close to reaching an approval and may consider a special meeting at the end of May. He stated that Planning will be back to discuss the project before Council in June and would like to see a July 1<sup>st</sup> vote.

Other similar projects in the region were discussed. One Lakewood Place is competing against similar developments to land tenants. Tenants are currently waiting to see if the project will be approved. The administration and Carnegie are speaking weekly about tenant attraction. The Committee discussed similar projects in the region and the use of incentives by those governments and the scale of government investment in the projects. Lakewood may consider an incentive on a case-by-case basis. Mayor Summers reminded Council that Cuyahoga County just awarded the City a \$600,000 grant to demolish the hospital.

Director Sylvester assured Council that they will seek all available opportunities for funding and grants.

In response to a question by a councilmember, Director Sylvester explained that the City is currently holding the Hilliard Theater site. If the City markets the Lawther Center it will market it alongside the Hilliard Theater site.

Due to time constraints, Ordinances 74-18 and 75-18 were not taken up.

Committee of the Whole adjourned at 7:00 p.m.