



City of Cleveland Heights Charter Review Commission

Submissions to the Commission

Committee of the Whole
4 June 2018

Messages and Documents Index

1. Message from Diane Hallum
2. Message from Councilmember Mary Dunbar

The following messages and other materials have been submitted to the Facilitator since the last sharing of Submissions. The materials are ordered by date received.

1. Diane Hallum – 25 May 2018

Dear Prof. Keller:

I read with interest the comments made by City Manager Tanisha Briley about how responsive her office is to citizens and their concerns.

Here on the north side of the city we recently had a teenager shot who later died and a woman shot while driving to Oxford Elementary School. Both these and other crimes have many of us here quite alarmed.

The Chief of Police arranged a meeting at the Community Center to discuss safety. I wrote the following email as an invalid who was unable to attend that very important meeting.

Nothing in my email reflects that I, as a citizen, was making a "public records request". This was a communication to the Chief of Police from a resident who lives on this side of town, could work with her, the police department, and the city to improve the situation here. I asked the questions that so many living around me were wanting answers to.

However, the "city", under the direction of Ms. Briley, declared my letter to the Chief of Police a "public records request", totally ignoring my concerns regarding the safety of our neighborhood.

I am attaching the image of the city's "response" to my email to the Chief of Police.

I am also attaching an image of a formal public records request that the city requires of people when they want records, such as documents, related to how the city governs. The format is based on specific demands placed on me by the law department over the years when I wanted access to specific records that are documents or emails the demonstrate how the city governs us. As you can see, I am

forced, as a non-legally trained individual with a cognitive disability, to write very specific content in a "public records request", since I have learned the city will find any, and I mean any, excuse to deny this citizen access to public records that should be readily available. I provide a typical "public records request" email to demonstrate that, over the years, I have been taught by the city about what must be in a "public records request" because, as written in this response from the city, as a resident I have repeatedly been told that I am not entitled to "information".

It is truly disturbing when an alarmed resident contacts the Police Chief to explain why she and others are so alarmed and makes an attempt to understand the whys, hows, wheres, etc. of just why we have so much crime here the the City Manager removes that simple communication from the hand's of the Chief and turns it into a "public records request".

That view regarding this resident's allowance to carry on any conversation with a City Hall staffer is further demonstrated in my final comment in the email to the Chief.

I simply asked the Chief about how to deal with the excessive debris I and others find when we pick up litter along our streets. Any reasonable person would have to wonder just how the city can declare my question concerning such an innocuous topic as "information" that I, a citizen, am not entitled to.

My attempt is to demonstrate the excessive absence of open dialog and communication between residents and City Hall. This particular issue was about our safety here on the north side of Cleveland Heights. Yet, I am relegated to a position of the press or an attorney when attempting to communicate about my safety and that of my neighbors or to ask about debris from car crashes.

These communications, I hope, demonstrate just how unresponsive, how abusive, and how uncivil the environment at City Hall has become under the direction of Ms. Briley.

Regards,

Diane L. Hallum

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject: Thank you.

Date: Wed, 7 Mar 2018 14:23:23 -0500 (GMT-05:00)

From: Diane Hallum <dhallum@earthlink.net><mailto:dhallum@earthlink.net>

Reply-To: Diane Hallum

<dhallum@earthlink.net><mailto:dhallum@earthlink.net>

To: Chief Mecklenburg <chief@clvhts.com><mailto:chief@clvhts.com>

Dear Chief Mecklenberg:

Thank you, for taking the time and effort to arrange an informative meeting on Feb. 28 for all those who could attend.

Unluckily, I was one of many who could not. A few could find no parking; others could not park in the handicapped spaces since they, too, were full; many had other obligations; and people like me were too weak or infirm to leave their homes to attend.

I believe that sharing of all available information can only do good; hence, my contacting you to ask if I may obtain the presentation materials you and your officers used at that meeting. My hopes are to write an article for publication in the Sun News, Sun Press, and possibly The Plain Dealer – since none of these newspapers are actually in wide distribution in our city, the more places this information can be shared, the better. I also will post any such article on Nextdoor and disseminate it among my Citizens Leadership participants who live and work across this city.

Many comments on Nextdoor.com were appreciative of what you shared. Others had many questions. For that reason, I hope to ask you a few questions so that what I write will provide those people some answers.

Among those questions are the possibility of working with your Police Department so that residents can create and operate Block Watches – hopefully with signage of such. Please let me know just how and who citizens must contact to get this going on their block.

I have my own questions that I naively hope will eliminate the drivers that bring these thugs into our neighborhoods. If we all understand just what drives these individuals to come here in the first place, we may be able to identify just how to deter their presence and future acts of crime and violence.

With regard to the shooting of the woman driving to Oxford Elementary, I hope you may be able to provide some answers.

Why was this individual who lives in Cleveland on that Cleveland Height street at that time of the day, with a gun?

Was he or his friend visiting someone in particular?

Was it drug related with regard to either buying, selling, or distributing?

Was there a particular house, group of houses, vacant lot, or another feature that provided them a place to visit or gather?

What other calls to the police or possible other calls to the city regarding vandalism, trespassing, suspicious activity, or crime were made a month or so before this particular shooting in the 4-5 block area of that shooting location?

How many other times did this shooter or his companions come to this particular

street in the past and how many others accompanied them during those “visits”?

If we all have an understanding of just what draws these types of individuals here in the first place, maybe we can all do things to reduce those environmental, business, or joy-riding factors.

I, myself, am tired of the repeated appearance of low-level drug dealers on my street and along Noble Road from Monticello Blvd. to Pennfield.

Frustratingly, past efforts by the drug task force have not provided any long-lasting deterrence since this was the situation over 4 years ago when citizens on this side of town rose up in anger and frustration about crime.

On one fairly warm, clear afternoon around 2:30 PM when Monticello Middle School was still open and kids were about to be let out for the day, there were nearly 8 different drug dealers on Noble Road, with one sitting quite arrogantly on the guardrail at the corner of Monticello and Noble, with his duffle bag of wares over his shoulder.

When I entered the Police Academy to simply request if two trainees could take a short 2-block stroll along Noble Road to get those thugs to move along, I was met with what I felt was an angry rebuff from the officer in charge there. I do not own a high-tech cellphone that can take pictures; but, I was taken aback when this officer demanded that the only option was that I appear in court to testify against these people. Yet, he felt no need to even check the cameras aimed at the streets to observe or report the actions of these interlopers. However, when I mentioned that one duffle-bag carrying individual rode his bicycle up the apron of the Academy parking lot, his dander against that individual rose up! How dare anyone drive into the parking lot was his view. Yet, nothing was done, because I asked to speak to a supervisor and waited and waited and waited.

Despite this lack of “Community Policing” on our streets, I have learned that friendliness and cheerful “hellos” to these people as I scooter by on my mobility device makes these thugs slightly uncomfortable.

I have also learned that a slightly older person on such a device who slowly travels toward them picking up trash and engaging in conversation with anyone who walks by soon gets these unsociables to take their leave of Noble Road to find more comfortable business environs.

Just my small part here on the north side of this city.

I do hope that all of us can develop tactics to dissuade these people from coming here so that, instead of your department having to chase or hunt down violent criminals,

we can more permanently prevent such crime from happening here in the first place.

My neuromuscular disability does interfere with my goals, so I hope that should my article take about a month to write, I hope you will understand and not find me unreliable.

Another question I hate to bother with has to do with accident debris. On one of my recent clean-up efforts after a thaw revealed all the garbage on the streets and tree lawns, I recovered what amounted to nearly the complete corner panel of a Toyota (based on the headlight, plastic shroud pieces, and blinkers). I even found the bar used to proper up the hood. This debris was scattered across 4-5 tree lawns and extended into 2 lawns. Are insurance companies responsible for removing the debris from these accidents? I would hope that residents should not have to be burdened by this extensive clean up that filled a complete trash bag when a driver irresponsibly deposits their car pieces and parts on the curb.

Thanks, again, for your work and outreach.

Respectfully,

Diane L. Hallum

Director, Citizens Leadership

1059 Oxford Road

216-691-9386

2. Councilmember Mary Dunbar 4 June 2018

Larry,

At the end of May, during our Council meeting, we discussed Kahlil Seren's comment that the Charter Review Commission was wasting it's [sic] time, that Council would be unable or unwilling to put anything the CRC recommended on the ballot. I don't believe that is the case.

I have been very impressed by the work of the CRC so far. We don't even know what the recommendation(s) will be.

In order to stay (more less) within a three minute time limit for our comments that Carol Roe hoped we could manage, I scripted my comments. I've attached them, in case of interest.

Hope you are enjoying the CRC assignment and life in general. Thanks for all you do. Best wishes.

Mary

Appendix 1

Council Comments
Councilmember Mary Dunbar

Council Comments, 05/29/2018

I watched the entire Charter Review Commission meeting of May 17, 2018. I was impressed by Tanisha's comments, Karen Knittel, the questions and comments of CRC members and public commentators. I am also impressed by the misinformation and misunderstanding in some people's comments.

A few facts. I have now been on City Council for about 6.5 years. When I started, Ed Kelley was our mayor. My vote enabled Council to hire a new City Manager.

Whatever you think of that decision, this is what Council is supposed to do, and we did it.

The first council committee I chaired was Administrative Services. I noticed we were overdue for a Charter Review, so I compared our charter to the Model City Charter of the National Civic League. I found that our charter generally compared favorably with the model charter, which is the form of government that the National Civic League favors. We have a very cost effective form of government. I hope the CRC will consider the cost of changing, and who's going to pay.

Mayor Dennis Wilcox did not want to undertake a charter review because, with the state devastating the municipal government fund and the estate tax, it was imperative to focus on getting new revenues to maintain services – and on solving somewhat hidden, though hugely impactful, problems with our water and sewer systems. Revenue and infrastructure issues took up huge amounts of time – still works in process, but we are on pathways to major improvements across the board. Please note that poverty has grown to include 20% of our population, and retired people pay little or no income tax, which is the City's primary source of revenue. Whether recognized or not, Council and our staff have had to dig your City out of some big holes, and we have.

A year or two ago, there were five relevant studies under way, including the Master Plan, what to do about Severance, and more. If there's one thing I've learned about government, it's that you have to have plans before you can get funds to implement them. I give Tanisha credit for getting City plans done. Council has endorsed the Master Plan. I'd like for us to be focused on implementing the more than 100 initiatives in that plan. We don't need more ideas. Let's get our action agenda done. Please note, by the way, that South Euclid does not have foreclosure bond requirements.

We are now well positioned to move ahead. We now have resources we previously lacked – sufficient revenues, plans, economic development staff, a communications person – we're working on Top of the Hill, a CDC, Meadowbrook-Lee, and more, to strengthen our tax base.

I know there's a lot of frustration with what's been happening to our community. A lot of our problem is that we have to deal at the municipal level with bad policies coming from the state and federal government. That's a challenging assignment. It's also another topic, so I'll stop.