



Approved 9/19/19

**City of Cleveland Heights
Refuse & Recycling Task Force**

**9/12/19 Meeting Minutes
Cleveland Heights City Hall – Council Chambers – 6:00 p.m.**

Ms. Constance Johnson called the meeting to order and read the purpose statement of the task force.

Ms. Johnson asked if everyone had a chance to review the minutes from last week and the week before.

Ms. Hope wright made motion to accept the minutes from both meetings.

Ms. Kelly Menaker seconded the motion.

Ms. Johnson asked if there was any old business.

Ms. Cathi Lehn asked if we have ever discussed how the information will be presented to council.

Ms. Johnson said no.

Ms. Collette Clinkscale commented about some of the communications from the task force, but asked if there was any information that the members of the task force needed.

Ms. Johnson posed the question to the members.

Ms. Jordan Davis commented that he wanted to thank the city for all of the information.

Ms. Johnson commented that she believes that the city has provided them with all of the information which is a lot to digest.

Ms. Johnson asked if anyone has any concerns could they please bring them to the table.

Ms. Susan Clement commented about Ms. Johnson's previous comment that she should talk to local communities to see how satisfied they were with using private haulers.

Ms. Clement talked to six local communities and none of the communities were dissatisfied with going to private haulers, some have been private for 25 years, some are currently in the bidding process.

Ms. Clement stood outside of some of the city halls and casually surveyed people leaving the buildings about the service and what their level of satisfaction was and many of the people were happy, the only negative comment was that one person said that the trucks come at all different times.

Ms. Johnson asked what cities she had visited.

Ms. Clement said, Euclid, Lyndhurst, North Olmsted, Westlake, South Euclid, Strongsville, Medina, and Willoughby.

Ms. Johnson said thank you for following up on that.

Mr. Tony Torres commented that Lyndhurst collects trash in house.

Ms. Clement said yes they do.

Ms. Clinkscale commented about a piece of correspondence from the recycling partnership. She said that she spoke to them about a year ago and she met with them and Diane Bickett, and at the time that she spoke with them they told her that the partnership would provide \$7.00 per cart, and that the city does look for grants where available.

Mr. Joe Kickel commented about a grant that the city had previously applied for with the Ohio EPA, and one of the things that hurt the city was that the city trucks do not put a lot of miles on their trucks, and because the mileage was so low, it hurt the city's eligibility.

Mr. Davis asked if the grant is still available, and that the city should be considering regenerative braking on trucks.

Mr. Kickel commented that the city does have one truck that has regenerative braking, and a full hybrid engine.

Ms. Carin Miller commented about some follow up work that she did with regards to workers compensation research. She said that she spoke with the county and Diane Bickett commented that they do not keep any records. She was directed to reach out to Lakewood, Lyndhurst, and Brooklyn. She had not heard back from Lyndhurst, but did hear back from Lakewood and Mr. Joe Beno and Brooklyn and Mr. John Verba said that it is really hard to separate out exact numbers, but the biggest savings with converting was the reduction in manpower. She said that the Lakewood service department used to have 40 workers but over the years through attrition the department was now down to 19, and they used to have 3 trucks with 9 workers for trash and now they are down to two drivers for automated collection. Mr. Beno also said that some of the workers still pick up yard waste manually. Ms. Miller found that it was hard to find a specific figure for workers comp reduction through some additional online research.

Ms. Johnson thanked Ms. Miller for her follow up research, and commented that it supports what the city has been saying.

Mr. Davis commented on a document that he received from the city of Akron for their workers comp. premiums from one year after converting to automation.

Ms. Johnson said that there are a lot of variables that affect injuries.

Ms. Miller commented that she did find some information but in most cases there were disclaimers that the numbers were subject to change from one year to the next.

Mr. Davis commented that there may be a point where we should stop sharpening a pencil.

Ms. Susan Efroymsen commented that one of the things that she is hearing is that there is a reduction in injuries, and that is real human cost.

Ms. Clinkscale presented some workers comp claim numbers for the Public Works Department, in 2016 there was \$133,875 in claims, there were 13 claims and 3 of them were from Refuse & Recycling; 2017 \$95,847, there were 15 claims and 7 of them were from Refuse & Recycling; 2018 \$51,355, there were 12 claims and 4 were for Refuse & Recycling, and even though the claims were down from 2017 to 2018 for the Public Works Department, city wide the claims went from \$131,000 to \$307,000 from 17 to 18.

Ms. Clinkscale said that generally, the premiums should go down.

Ms. Johnson asked if there are any additional old business concerns.

Ms. Johnson started talking about the decision tree, and maybe we should start looking at the low hanging fruit.

Mr. John Blackwell commented about an article that he read that by 2030 in California packaging materials will need to be comprised of 70-75% recycled materials. Mr. Blackwell said that 20 years is a long way down the road, but the demand for recycled materials is likely to increase.

Ms. Johnson said that we all have a shared interest in recycling, because it is something that we all do, but what can we recommend.

Ms. Efroymsen said that it's going to be a changing landscape, and our recommendation has to allow for that.

Mr. Blackwell said that we have to have a collection system that is flexible.

Ms. Miller said that we should not get too hung up on this, because it is a changing landscape, and we have a valuable resource in the Cuyahoga County Solid Waste District, and as long as we have a flexible system it is not as big of a problem as everyone thinks it is.

Mr. Davis said that he has a low hanging fruit, and he suggested that the task force recommend that we automate.

Ms. Wright asked if that was a motion.

Mr. Davis said that he'd make it a motion.

Ms. Menaker said that she'd second the motion.

Mr. Davis said that he'd move that Cleveland Heights move to automated collection in whatever form the task force decides.

Ms. Johnson asked if there was any objection.

Mr. Blackwell said that we still need the numbers so that we can compare them with the automation in house and the automation out of house.

Mr. Davis said yes, only automation is on the table, not privatization.

Mr. Blackwell said that we still need the numbers to compare.

Ms. Johnson said yes, but we need to make some progress so the motion that just passed is for automation.

Ms. Johnson asked Mr. Blackwell if his opinion would change with the numbers.

Mr. Blackwell said that he is in favor of the motion, but if it ends up costing a million dollars a year more, we probably would not go down the road of trying to convince council to do so. We want to know how much it will save us, in cost, injuries, and workers.

Mr. Davis said we've done a lot of research, and we have made our decision, and we will support that decision with our research when it's time to go public.

Mr. Blackwell said I've just voted for automation and I think it will be a savings to the city, but I want to be able to support that recommendation to council.

Ms. Johnson commented that maybe she missed something, but don't we have that information. We have the current cost, and we have the projected cost for automation.

Ms. Johnson said can we bullet point out some decisions, at least some of the big points.

Ms. Menaker said that Joe Kickel has the costs in the last column for the different options per house, per family, and if we could keep the costs from doubling, and it's not a big jump, you're talking from \$11.50 to \$14.76.

Ms. Clement commented that she was wondering why 39 out of 59 communities decided to privatize and that it came with a cost savings, and residents were satisfied with the service that was provided.

Ms. Menaker said that it's cheaper to go private, and asked Mr. Kickel if those were the most recent contracts.

Mr. Kickel said that the three contracts provided were the three most recent contracts signed, but the prices were the 2020 contract prices, and he described the units that were used to determine the contract prices.

Mr. Kickel commented about some of Ms. Clement's comments about city's that utilize private haulers, and how they have some staff still assigned to refuse collection that is not included in the private contractor prices.

Mr. Kickel also talked about the social cost of privatization and how you cannot put a price on that.

Ms. Wright commented about the \$11.50 fee and how it was from 2015 and has not increased with inflation. She also commented about the transfer station being unique to Cleveland Heights. She also commented about the services that the city provides for the different festivals, as well as community and religious events.

Ms. Clement commented that we do have a transfer facility, but it is an aging facility, and it's going to cost maintenance and repairs. She also commented about new trucks having a 10 year estimated useful life, and will there be a task force in ten years to determine whether or not the city should privatize again.

Ms. Johnson said will there be a task force to determine whether or not we should do away with privatization. She also said once we privatize there's usually no going back.

Ms. Clement commented about Cleveland Heights being a strong recycling community, and what if the city changed its philosophy to refusing to buy products that are single use, encourage composting, encourage ecologically friendly packaging.

Ms. Johnson said that she thinks Ms. Clement is correct, but she is not sure how much the task force can encourage that through their work, but it should be noted in the recommendation.

Mr. Kickel recommended that in the recommendation a statement should be made about the City acting as a steward of change.

Mr. Kickel also commented that the cost of new equipment is also incorporated into the estimated prices that were presented to the group.

Ms. Efroymsen asked if Ms. Clement was suggesting some sort of penalty for homeowners who don't recycle.

Ms. Clement said that change needs to come, but she is not recommending that anything should be mandatory.

Ms. Miller commented that she agrees that Cleveland Heights can be a leader of change, and maybe a sustainability coordinator position could be a benefit to the community.

Ms. Miller commented that maybe we as a community can set some goals for how to reduce waste going to the landfill.

Mr. Blackwell asked a question about what was the cost for what we're doing right now on the spreadsheet.

Mr. Kickel described the current operation which is the baseline price in the spreadsheet. He also walked through some of the estimated price models for each different decision.

Ms. Clinkscale commented that the prices in the spreadsheet are estimated numbers, and that they'd probably be close, but the city would get a more accurate number through a rate analysis.

Ms. Clement asked Mr. Torres what the city charges businesses for collection.

Mr. Torres said that the city does not service many commercial businesses, but the cost is \$11.50 per unit for apartments.

Ms. Clement commented that she drove by a business on Warrensville that had quite a few bags in front of it.

Mr. Torres asked if she was referring to the pub.

Ms. Clement said yes.

Mr. Torres said they have apartments so we collect there and we charge the two apartments and business downstairs.

Ms. Clement said I just asked if you charge the business.

Mr. Torres said yes we do.

Ms. Clement asked what the price is for a business.

Mr. Torres said \$11.50 per month.

Ms. Clement said \$11.50 per month for a business.

Mr. Torres said that he did not make that rate.

Ms. Clinkscale said that some businesses have apartments above so they pay for each apartment and the business for the limited number of businesses that the city does service.

Ms. Wright said that businesses are going to have considerably a lot more refuse and should be charged accordingly.

Ms. Clinkscale said we agree.

Mr. Torres said that there are only about five commercial businesses that we service.

Mr. Davis asked if there is a chance to streamline operations, save money, and possibly charge businesses.

Mr. Davis asked Mr. Kickel about the \$2.2 Million cost for the department.

Mr. Kickel commented about the previous spreadsheet which incorporated indirect costs, which would not change.

Ms. Clinkscale said that the only costs that you are not seeing is repair costs and fuel which are paid out of another department.

Mr. Kickel commented about the Vehicle Maintenance Department's tracking of maintenance costs.

Mr. Davis said that he is not interested in sharpening that pencil.

Mr. Davis commented that he would like to try and target some more low hanging fruit.

Mr. Blackwell commented that the private contractor's prices include maintenance, so how can we get an apples to apples comparison.

Mr. Kickel said that he has 2015 costs for repairs.

Mr. Davis commented to Mr. Blackwell that if we look at the \$2.2 Million and the maintenance costs we get a figure that is still competitive.

Mr. Blackwell said we do.

Ms. Johnson said that we are getting close to our time, but we wanted to give our residents a chance to speak.

Ms. Clement commented that she spoke to many service directors and keeping the operation in house cannot be cost effective, and why did 39 out of 59 communities switch to a private hauler and make such unwise choices.

Ms. Johnson said that most of the points you are asking about have been addressed in this meeting.

Ms. Menaker said that she believes that most communities switch to privatization is because it is easy, but Cleveland Heights is a unique community.

Mr. Blackwell commented that per a previous email, waste disposal is public responsibility and that you want to keep your hands on it, and you don't see communities privatizing police forces.

Ms. Miller seconded Mr. Blackwell's comments by saying that if you want to take more responsibility for changing the environment it would be easy to do if you have control of your operation.

Ms. Lehn commented that the city is in a very uncertain environment with recycling, and we want to keep our options open, and closing the transfer station would eliminate some of those options.

Ms. Efroymsen commented that a comment that she has heard in some discussion groups is that it is very easy to live here in Cleveland Heights.

Ms. Johnson said one thing that we have not heard is about our employees.

Ms. Clement commented that she is a union supporter, but she has also worked at two hospitals that have closed, so sometimes you have to make an economic decision.

Ms. Johnson said that if you can keep it in house for an increased cost of a few dollars, it would be worth it.

Mr. Kickel commented about education, and when you have your own fleet of trucks you have your own fleet of billboards, and garbage trucks can be used to educate the public.

Mr. Torres said that many cities went private when a lot of landfills started closing.

Mr. Davis commented about requesting an extension of the meetings.

Ms. Miller asked if there was a document or presentation.

Mr. Kickel said that a document should be drafted.

Ms. Johnson suggested adding more time to the meetings.

Mr. Kickel said there are a couple of schedule conflicts in October.

Ms. Efroymsen asked for clarification that there are two available meeting dates in October.

Ms. Johnson asked if everyone was in agreement that we'll extend the meeting an additional 30 minutes with a ten minute break.

Ms. Miller commented that there are two additional meeting dates in October on the 10th and the 24th.

Ms. Efroymsen made a motion to add the additional meetings.

Ms. Wright seconded the motion.

Ms. Johnson asked if there was any opposition. There was no opposition.

Ms. Johnson moved the meeting to the public comments section.

Ms. Kathy Smachlo from Shaker Heights commented that she liked the idea of a sustainability person. She said that there are lots of reuse programs available. She commented about the Michigan bottle tax. She commented about recyclables being exported because the machines were in Asia, but there is a need to get the machinery here in the U.S.

Ms. Nikki Evans commented that she is very impressed with all of the information, and she can't wait to read the report.

Mr. Michael Malloy a Refuse & Recycling employee for the city commented about the different changes the city has been through with its refuse collection operation

throughout the years since his family moved to the city in the 70's. He said the operation needs an upgrade to keep with the changing times.

Ms. Evans asked the task force about their decision to automate, and does that include keeping the operation in house.

Mr. Davis said that they have not decided whether or not to keep the operation in house or privatize.

Ms. Johnson thanked everyone for their comments.

Ms. Miller said that she has a rough draft of an outline for the recommendation.

Ms. Johnson asked everyone to keep an eye on their email.

Ms. Johnson asked if there was a motion to adjourn.

Ms. Clement made a motion to adjourn.

Ms. Efroymsen seconded the motion.

Ms. Johnson asked if there was any opposition. There was no opposition.

Ms. Johnson adjourned the meeting.