



City of Powell, Ohio
City Council

**COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 20, 2017**

A Council Committee of the Whole meeting was called to order by Mayor Brian Lorenz on Tuesday, June 20, 2017 at 6:00 p.m. City Council members present included Frank Bertone, Jon Bennehoof, Tom Counts, Jim Hrivnak, Brian Lorenz, Brendan Newcomb and Daniel Swartwout. Also present were Steve Lutz, City Manager; Gene Hollins, Law Director; Gary Vest, Police Chief; Dave Betz, Development Director; Debra Miller, Finance Director; Jeff Snyder, Director of Parks, Rec & Public Service; Chris Huber, City Engineer; John Moorehead, Assistant City Engineer; Doyle Clear, Traffic Engineer; Megan Canavan, Communications Director; and Karen J. Mitchell, City Clerk.

DISCUSSION

- **STATE ROUTE 315 CLOSURE.** Council discussed the extreme traffic congestion through Powell, particularly at rush hour, caused by the closure of State Route 315 between Jewett Road and State Route 750 (Powell Road). A video was taken by drone on Friday, June 16, 2017 during the evening rush hour through and around the Powell corporate limits and showed significant backups, particularly westbound on East Olentangy (State Route 750), southwest on Bennett Parkway, and southbound on South Liberty. Very little traffic was noted on Murphy Parkway.

Chief Vest felt there was not sufficient wayfinding signage directing commuters to alternative routes, and while people are more familiar with Bennett Parkway, Murphy Parkway was underutilized. The major traffic back up problems occur between 9:30 am - 10 am and 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm weekdays. Chief identified three intersections within the corporate limits where the congestion is most pronounced: Liberty & Bennett, the Four Corners, and Bennett & S.R. 750. He said Jewett & Liberty was also a problem, but that was in Liberty Township and outside the City's jurisdiction. The cost for policing traffic at those three intersections would be approximately \$1,400 per day through August 1st (the anticipated date S.R. 315 will open), for a total of approximately \$42,000. Chief did not feel there would be a benefit for a temporary three-way stop at Liberty & Bennett Parkway or that directing traffic would have a significant impact on traffic. He did recommend placing wayfinding signs for commuters directing them around the Four Corners via Bennett Parkway and Murphy Parkway.

Mr. Clear stated that he felt the City needed to look for more regional solutions and work with regional partners for a solution. Although ODOT put signage up directing commuters to use State Route 23 as an alternative, drivers are not using it, in his opinion, because it's not working anymore as a sufficient alternate route. Sawmill Parkway via S.R. 315 to Hard Road to Sawmill Parkway would be a better alternative and is currently underutilized. Mr. Clear felt ODOT could be a bit more proactive. Mr. Clear also mentioned contacting Liberty Township over the intersection of Jewett & Liberty which is in their jurisdiction about having an officer directing traffic there.

Other concerns discussed were residents being unable to make left turns at Bennett & Liberty Roads and drivers stopping on the railroad tracks on Liberty Street. The Four Corners discussion centered on if left turns should be restricted from Liberty Street to Olentangy Street and, if so, should those restrictions be temporary or permanent as well as should it be at all times or limited to rush hour. There is already restrictions on left turns from Olentangy Street (S.R. 750) to Liberty Street between the hours of 4 pm and 7 pm.

Wayfinding signs could be ordered to direct commuters to alternative routes on Murphy Parkway as well as Bennett Parkway. Mr. Huber stated it may take as long as 2 weeks to get the signs once they are ordered.

ACTION PLAN: Wayfinding signage, as recommended by Chief Vest, will be ordered immediately to direct traffic to alternative routes around the Four Corners intersection. Mr. Lutz will reach out to see if the signs can be expedited. Mayor Lorenz will contact the trustees at Liberty Township to see if they would partner with the

City with respect to the intersection of Jewett & Liberty. Police Officers will be immediately stationed at the Four Corners, Liberty Road & Bennett Parkway, and Powell Road & Bennett Parkway to direct traffic during the evening rush hour (4:00 pm to 7:00 pm) and a proposed ordinance will be presented to Council later in the evening for restricting left-turns at the Four Corners.

- **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS.** Council then focused on the various capital improvement projects in the City in an effort to update and prioritize projects.

- Seldom Seen Park: Staff has returned all engineering comments to Meyers & Associates and is attempting to schedule a meeting to go over the final comments in order to get the project out to bid, including a final cost estimate and time schedule. Staff has had some difficulty getting a meeting scheduled and is frustrated with the lack of progress, particularly in light of quickly closing window to get the work completed in time to meet the October 20th seeding date. It was recommended not to separately bid out the tree-clearing portion of the project as previously discussed. **Action Plan: Mr. Lutz will follow up with Meyer & Associates to see if he can get the final meeting scheduled and reiterate Council's desire to keep this matter moving and on schedule to meet the planting deadline later this year.**

- CSX Adventure Park Tunnel Repair: The tunnel has reopened with a temporary solution of scaffolding. There is a permanent solution to install a metal tunnel within the concrete structure. This approach should eliminate future problems with the aging CSX tunnel from interfering with pedestrian uses. The ballpark cost for installing a metal tunnel is approximately \$100,000-\$150,000 and the Engineering Department could have a cost estimate by the end of July or August. CSX insurance requirements will push the City to use a railroad contractor which may come at a premium cost.

- CSX/Murphy Parkway Pedestrian Crossing: The conceptual plan was approved by CSX. Mr. Betz found and applied for a small grant and will find out toward the end of July if it is awarded to this project. It is not a large grant, but should fund part of the signalization cost.

- Grace Drive Traffic Signals: The Grace Road & Olentangy Street signal installation was awarded in November and hardware came in about two weeks ago. There was a delay in installation caused when it was determined that some utilities would need to be moved and that had to be coordinated with each utility company. The contractor is doing underground boring now, the foundations for the poles will be poured next week, with signals up in the next few weeks.

The status of the Grace Drive & Liberty Street signal is that the City is still in right-of-way acquisition discussions. Engineering plans are almost complete and bids will follow once the right-of-way acquisition is secured and the review of plans are finalized.

- Lechler Building Improvements: Due to funding restraints, this matter has been put on hold and is not viewed as a priority project at this point in time.

- New Bikepaths: The new Rutherford Road path and North Liberty path are currently underway. There are still some spot repairs to do in other places.

- 2017 Street Maintenance & 2017 Sidewalk Repairs: Bids have been awarded for both programs and preconstruction meetings are scheduled within the week.

- **GRANTS.**

- CSX/Murphy Parkway Pedestrian Crossing: As noted above, Mr. Betz applied for a small grant and should find out if the City will be awarded the grant at the end of July.

- Sawmill Parkway Mill and Overlay: The City is going through training to administer the grant. Estimated construction is 2019.

- **INITIATIVES.**

- Capital Improvements Sustainability Program – Councilman Counts said that of all the options available to fund capital improvements, it was felt that the least of all evils was to go to voters; however, much has to happen first. He suggested developing a citizens group similar to the group that was formed for the Comprehensive Plan. This group will hear all the information and make recommendations. Councilman Counts hopes to have the group put together this fall.

- ONE Community: Due to time constraints, the Mayor asked Councilman Bennehoof to speak about this during Open Session at Council.

Both Councilman Counts and Mayor Lorenz asked that Council remain mindful of the use of Staff and Council time, focus on the priority issues outlined tonight, and try to avoid getting caught up on issues that are not a priority but take up Staff and Council time.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

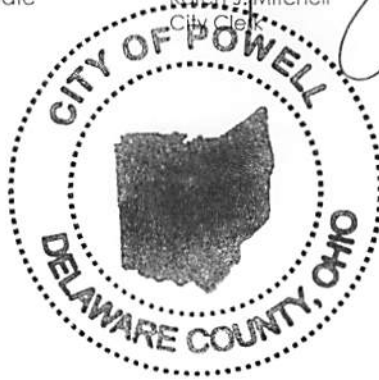
MINUTES APPROVED: July 5, 2017


Brian Lorenz
Mayor

7/7/17
Date


Karen J. Mitchell
City Clerk

7/7/2017
Date



Jon Bennehoof

Frank Bertone

Tom Counts

City Council
Brian Lorenz, Mayor
Jim Hrivnak

Brendan Newcomb

Daniel Swartwout