

Public Utilities Committee Meeting
Wednesday, September 15, 2021, 8:30 a.m.

Members Present: Chairwoman Nairn, Councilman Galicki, Mayor Koons,
Fiscal Officer Romanowski

Nairn indicated that the first agenda item to be addressed was the Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council (NOPEC) Community Choice and Sustainable Energy Program. The Mayor referred to a newspaper article discussing a presentation made by NOPEC to Bainbridge Township. The Mayor also referenced the NOPEC sustainability report from last summer. He scheduled NOPEC to attend the October 25th Council meeting to make the presentation. NOPEC wanted municipalities to pass a resolution by the end of the year on the electricity output. They are looking at a 100% renewable option that would cost about \$3.00 per month for a total of \$42.00 per year. They have asked municipalities to join and recommended a public hearing on October 25th, which the Mayor put in the fall newsletter. People can attend the meeting to learn about the proposal and comment on it. A copy of the resolution was provided to Council in July. The bottom line is that people would be asked to pay \$42 more per year for electricity because it would all be renewable. Galicki added that it would not be as reliable and referenced the events in Texas last year with the power supply when there were weather issues. They were using renewable energy sources which were not reliable during the severe weather. Nairn verified the proposal had nothing to do with natural gas. The Mayor said it just involved electricity.

The Mayor explained that the October 25th meeting would begin with a public hearing at 7:30 p.m. He thought there would be discussion in the Council meeting after the hearing. The Fiscal Officer asked if the matter required public hearings. The Mayor said he did not know that it required a hearing but recalled hearing that it was recommended. He did not think it was something that would be passed that night. Nairn asked if everyone in the Village would automatically be enrolled if Council were to pass a resolution. Galicki advised that the newspaper article indicated that there was an option to opt out, so if Council approves it, you are in unless you want to opt out.

Nairn asked which NOPEC representative would be involved and indicated that the last one caused confusion. The Mayor said that he did not want to challenge the Solicitor, but all 200 communities did the process the way NOPEC instructed, except for the Village. As a result, there were more hoops to jump through with the two meetings which no one attended.

Nairn addressed the annual United States Geological Survey (USGS) survey of the Village wells. She felt it was important to oversee the health of the wells in the Village. She asked the Mayor how many homes in the Village had wells, and the Mayor explained that from the Chagrin line to about Laurel is on city water. Residents east of this are on wells. Whitetail and Paw Paw Lake have their own water systems. The Mayor expanded on the history of city water vs. well water around the Village.

The committee discussed stormwater in relation to well water levels. Galicki noted that USGS measures the quantity of the water, but not quality. The water quality can be tested by Geauga County. The Fiscal Officer asked if Charles Hart, USGS, had to attend the meeting since he

provided a detailed report. The Mayor thought this would be a waste of his time. He would call Hart and ask what he wanted to do. Nairn asked if this was a yearly contract. The Mayor proposed signing a five-year contract. The Mayor added that perhaps the Village should pay to have the water quality tested. Galicki said that this may not provide an accurate view of the community. There can be two wells next to each other where the results can be completely different. The results depend on how deep the well is, where the well is tapping into the water, etc. One well can be contaminated and the house next door that might have a deeper well may be fine. Nairn indicated that the Manor Brook and Whitetail water is tested, and residents receive a detailed report yearly. Galicki advised that in Kensington Green, each house has its own well as with the rest of the Village other than Manor Brook, Whitetail, and Paw Paw Lake.

Nairn asked if there were any communities that require homeowners to test the quality of their well water. Galicki thought this might be done on transfer of property. Businesses might have a monthly or quarterly test required if it is potable water. The Mayor suggested asking the USGS representative about water quality testing, but thought he would refer the Village to a private testing facility. He would also ask him about a five-year contract. Galicki saw the benefit of keeping the USGS services, although the Village was the only municipality in Geauga County to do so.

Nairn addressed the possibility of fracking in the Village and referred to an article about fracking in Auburn Township and the related concern about the effects on the LaDue Reservoir. She spoke to the Building Inspector, who provided her with an article that states that in the Village of South Russell, it is not permissible to drill or frack in an area that is less than 80 acres. No one owns 80 acres in the community. Nairn discussed the relationship between fracking and earthquakes as well as contamination of well water. Nairn concluded that the Village was safe from fracking, but the Mayor said the State can override home rule citing the ability of homeowners to derive the benefit of their land. Nairn referenced another article that said the State of Ohio preempted all local regulations of oil and gas wells. At least there was some legislation on the books for the Village.

The Mayor discussed the bowling alley lots and new construction of homes. Nairn stated that there is also a law that allows two adjacent property owners to combine acreage in order to have the 80 acres for fracking.

Nairn adjourned the meeting at 9:06 a.m.

Cindy Nairn, Chairwoman