

**Minutes  
Committee of the Whole  
September 26, 2023**

The Committee of the Whole met on September 26, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. in the Conference Room at the City Building. The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. by Mayor Melissa Monich. Attendance was as follows:

Council Members:

Dan Driehaus  
Grant Hoffman  
Melissa Monich  
April Robles  
Sarah Stankorb Taylor  
Jodi Woffington  
Chris Woodside

Environmental Stewardship Commission Guests:

Dennis Healy  
Chris Pagan  
Patrick Walker

Discussion of Spring Clean Up/Junk Day

Mayor Monich thanked the ESC for their work; they are a very active commission who are doing many good deeds. Mr. Healy stated that the Environmental Stewardship Commission would like to recommend City Council permanently cancel the annual Junk Day/Spring Clean Up event. The Commission feels that Junk Day duplicates existing waste removal services at an added expense of approximately \$16,000 annually. In addition, the "Ecological Stewardship and Sustainability" section of the City's Master Plan calls for the City to "investigate ways to further expand City-wide recycling programs" and "encourage and expand residential composting and explore other methods to reduce net solid waste volume." In 2023, Junk Day generated over 80 tons of additional waste. For reasons of both cost and policy, the ESC believes that Junk Day should be permanently cancelled.

Mr. Healy explained that the Commission suggests that the money it saves by not having Junk Day could be used to expand services that are more consistent with the Master Plan. Upcycle Day diverts approximately 20 tons of waste from the landfill however the program is primarily volunteer run and additional assistance from the City is needed to make it sustainable and scalable. It would be helpful if the City could take over the public relations/communications tasks and provide a police officer to help with traffic control during the busy drop off periods. Additionally, help is needed in executing agreements with the nonprofit companies that participate in Upcycle Day.

The new Residential Food Waste Collection program is on-track to divert up to 12 tons of waste from the landfill. Funding will be required to sustain the program after the current grant concludes and to further expand the program, in which City Council has already made this commitment. Additionally, Freebox is another tool for residents to use in place of Junk Day.

Mr. Hoffman asked clarification regarding the food composting program and inquired if the materials collected are sent elsewhere. Mr. Pagan explained that there is a contract with an industrial composting company who collects the materials and brings it to a family farm near Toledo where it is composted into a rich soil amendment full of organic matter, nutrients, and probiotics for soil building and growing healthy plants. City Council had allocated \$4,000 to start the program and the remainder of the cost was obtained by a grant. The program has been in place since April and we are on track to collect one ton of material a month and have the capacity for more., Mr. Nicolls noted that the tonnage of materials that are collected are added to the City's recycling tonnage figures which brings our recycling rate higher providing more recycling rebate funds from the County.

Ms. Woffington commented that the metrics make sense and she does not question the numbers, she commented that Junk Day has become a community-wide tradition event. There are kids and teenagers, including her own, that walk around and collect items to recycle and upcycle into items that interest them. She asked if there has been any conversation about the impact on the community that the elimination of Junk Day might bring. Mr. Walker stated that Junk Day began in the 1990s when we were more of a throwaway society. Junk Day was a way for people that had the ability to get rid of things they bought that they didn't want anymore for those that may not have had the ability necessarily to buy them. When Junk Day began, Freebox was not around and Upcycle Day wasn't a concept. Today, there is a large ecological society of pickers and scrappers and people that do not have money, people that do, makers, artists, and the like and they are all competing for the same thing. The ESC recognizes all the good intentions that Junk Day is and that we have a feeling of love and excitement for what it brings, and that is what Upcycle Day was created for and Freebox as well. The question remains of how we transfer the things that we love into the hands of people that can use them and avoid the landfill.

The ESC feels that Upcycle Day can be the replacement of the Junk Day traditions and many other communities do this as well. However, Upcycle Day cannot be sustained on a volunteer basis. Mr. Healy commented that Council should also consider not only the sustainability but the scalability of the program and make Upcycle Day more of an event and time it around Earth Day.

Ms. Woffington commented that from a cultural and emotional impact, how can Council get the community's support behind the elimination of Junk Day. Mr. Hoffman added that upset residents are not going to contact the ESC, they will contact Council and/or City staff

members and time needs to be spent on the social uptake of eliminating Junk Day and not only on the numbers, logistics, and operation impacts of it. Mr. Healy commented that a lean into it approach may have to be taken, the Junk Day tonnage has decreased for the past few years until last year when it spiked again. By talking about Junk Day, interest increased, and more people took advantage of the Day thereby increasing the tonnage last year. If we begin to talk more about Upcycle Day and Freebox, perhaps the interest will shift in that direction.

Mr. Pagan commented that the ESC believes the dialogue should center around that the Master Plan does not support the Junk Day program and the City spends approximately \$16,000 of the taxpayer's money to support Junk Day when residents can be placing an item out each week in their trash for free.

Discussion was held regarding how our elderly residents or accessibility impaired residents can participate in Upcycle Day and whether or not a service can be offered to pick up those items. The ESC felt that if more funding and staff were directed to the Upcycle Day program, this assistance could be provided.

Ms. Robles stated that after having lived in Wyoming for ten years, she likes the event end of Junk Day as this is how she has met some of her neighbors, however, advertising that it's Junk Day in Wyoming places us in a bad light, in her opinion. She expressed concern that this is a poor image of what we want our community to be like, that we should be acting like a greener community where residents can move forward and learn and be educated about more green and sustainable efforts. She inquired if community groups or non-profit organizations could be given a donation if they volunteer to work the Junk Day event. Additionally, the education aspect of the proposal is very important and one example is the number of items that Rumpke can now recycle, which has increased, but now one had to determine if an item is recyclable by its number or bottle shape, etc. and she suggested that a rubric or matrix of items and how they can be disposed of could be created to help people determine a better path for an item other than tossing it to the curb.

Mr. Healy commented that the ongoing education campaigns can make a real difference in changing how people can dispose of their unwanted items and he felt that the education aspect from the City's vantage point, is a tangible tool that the City can use.

Comments were shared regarding the tours that Rumpke provided of their recycling facilities (before COVID) and that perhaps some of the vendors that participate in Upcycle Day could provide tours of their facilities to help educate anyone that would want to know more. If some cannot commit to tours perhaps short, five-minute videos could be created and people can take virtual tours. This was thought to be a way to get more people to participate.

Mr. Herzog commented that many people may already know that Rumpke is a challenge. The City receives a fair number of complaints. Discussion was held regarding the different instances where a resident hauled an item out to the curb and Rumpke doesn't pick it up for whatever reason, will the item then sit at the curb for a length of time, upsetting the neighbors.

Mayor Monich summarized that if the City provided assistance, it would be put towards contacting vendors to participate, using Public Works staff, and Police for traffic control. The ESC members would still help to facilitate the event.

Mr. Walker suggested instead of hosting Junk Day on Earth Day that the City use Upcycle Day and host a City-wide Earth Day event at Oak Park. The Green Business Award winners could set up booths and share information as well as local non-profits such as Valley Interfaith. We could give these types of organizations a place to set up and share how to do good in our community. There has been a lot of tradition with Junk Day, however now we have the ability to do what it was supposed to be about but doing it in an environmentally friendly way.

Ms. Woffington advised that it should not be underestimated the amount of blowback that Council and Staff will get if Junk Day is discontinued. Mr. Herzog commented that this is not something that Council needs to do a resolution for now. This is a big decision however Council will need to provide him what direction it wants to go.

#### Review Proposed Capital Improvement Program and Proposed 2023 Appropriation Budget

Mr. Herzog shared the revised CIP list updated with changes that Council proposed at the last Committee of the Whole meeting. The revised version of the CIP list is included as an attachment to these minutes. Mayor Monich explained that the goal this evening is to have a basis consistent with the budget and some alternative projects. Mr. Herzog added that he is looking for Council's support in whichever way they choose to go. Discussion was held on each of the items and Mr. Herzog explained which project grants and loans can be obtained for and those that can be paid for in cash from the General Fund.

Mayor Monich commented that we should keep a conservative eye on the reserves and be resilient in case anything happens. Mr. Caudill stated that he tries to keep six months of operating expenses in the reserves for emergencies. Mr. Herzog reviewed the list of alternative projects to help Council decide what, if any, should be funded in next year's budget. Additionally, some alternative projects can wait for funding approval until next year so we can have a better understanding of the funding that would be available for them.

Mr. Herzog explained the alternative funding request for a sidewalk expansion on Linden Ridge. The request to expand the sidewalk from Linden Lane to Linden Ridge was made by a family on Linden Ridge with special needs. This particular sidewalk expansion was in the

CIP list three years ago and has reached the top of the list for 2024 funding consideration. Mr. Herzog explained that the estimated cost for the project could change significantly as the project will involve obtaining easements and the topography at this intersection is a challenge as well. Currently, there is not enough right-of-way to construct the sidewalk extension which is why an easement would need to be obtained from one property owner. Mr. Herzog noted that the homeowner who would be requested to grant an easement is less than enthusiastic about the ask. The homeowner is wanting the City to provide them with a significant payment for his property in which the City does not handle easements with financial compensation. We will, however, restore the grounds that have been disturbed and the City could install some landscaping to help improve the visual appearance. Mr. Herzog further explained that there would be no grants or other funding sources because of the need to obtain right-of-way property however if Council provides the direction that this project should be funded then we will find a way to fund it. Some members of Council expressed concern that this request may lead to setting a precedence by allowing residents to ask the City to fund something that only benefits a few.

Mr. Herzog explained that the amount of cash available at the end of the year to fund projects will not be fully known until the end of the year tax receipts have been received. Mayor Monich stated that, in her opinion, she does not see any projects on the CIP list that she would not support or would not want to fund. Mr. Herzog stated that he will keep working on the numbers and keep everyone up to date.

#### Road Funding Discussions

Mr. Caudill began a discussion on the General Fund projects on the CIP list. Mr. Herzog visited residents on Mt. Pleasant Avenue about the potential reconstruction of the road which will include water work and sidewalk installation. It was suggested that residents who do not live on Mt. Pleasant who were not explained the project in detail by Mr. Herzog may need to be educated about what the \$5M+ price tag of the project entails.

Discussion was held regarding the importance of educating residents on the school district's potential tax levy and a City property tax levy. Mayor Monich commented that the community is only strong when the school and the city are strong together. Mr. Woodside added that if the City has a strong case for a levy, in theory, it would be supported by the residents. He does not believe that residents will pick one levy over the other because people live here because they want great schools in a great community. Mr. Hoffman stated that, if Council feels that a levy is inevitable and it should be put on the ballot, that the City should not wait for the schools to decide on their levy. When we are ready to proceed, we should move forward.

Mayor Monich commented that it may be helpful to explain how much a one mill levy or a two mill levy might look like for a Wyoming resident. Everyone will be seeing their new tax

bills in December, and we need to be cognizant of families and how much they are being called on to help.

Mr. Herzog explained that one answer he needs from this meeting is if Council feels that a levy is the way to proceed. If that is the direction, he will call on Mr. Caudill to begin to look at that process and research how much money the different millages will generate and the timeline of a ballot proposal. None of this has been completed yet, pending direction from Council. It was suggested that Council begin to discuss our road conditions in the community as well as the idea of holding an open forum for community involvement and feedback to help explain what the challenges are and what solutions are available to help. Mr. Herzog stated that everyone needs to over-communicate the issues to the residents and generate conversations within the community. Ms. Woffington suggested adding to these discussions that the City has not asked for a levy before [the school system has asked for and received levies in the past].

Mr. Caudill explained that Council's philosophy in the past has been not to issue a levy but to use our capacity to issue general obligation debt to pay for projects, so we didn't have to ask for a levy. In this approach, we are limited to the number of roads that can be done each year. The approach has been to do 2-3 roads per year and continue to pay on the debt until it is gone and then repeat the cycle.

Mr. Caudill further explained how debt is issued for various projects including the use of bonds, grants, and issued debt. It was suggested that if a community forum were to be held, this would be helpful information for the public to see what projects were completed in what year and how much they cost.

Mayor Monich commented that she is comfortable in taking a hybrid approach. Roads are going to get worse and the cost to fix them will become more expensive, and the situation needs to be dealt with. She is reticent about sharing the whole amount of all that is needed for the street repairs and the whole amount of a levy because resident taxes are going up, they will go up if the school has a levy and their property taxes are going up on average twenty percent at the end of the year. Using a timeline and creating a phased education/communication approach, get feedback from the community, and then decide what path to take seems to be the best scenario.

Mr. Herzog shared that a phased education/communication plan could begin with phase one consisting of sharing the background of the road reconstruction process and education materials to help residents understand the process. A map will be shared showing the rating of each street, the current problems that street is experiencing, what the PCI index is, and the general background information so that people can be educated about our roads and what it means to them. Additionally, a page will be built on the City's website and will contain all information and facts. Phase two would continue the education

phase but would bring in the financial impact of the street repair situation. This information could include facts on how much is currently spent on street repairs and how much it will cost to repair all 123 streets. Additionally in this phase would be where grants can be explained, how we spend the tax revenue that is received, and this could be the educational component from a finance perspective. Phase three could be the solution phase. This is the problem, we have educated the community, this is the financial impact of that problem, and what are we going to do about it. This phased approach is draft and tentative at this point, and we would not move on to the next phase until we felt that residents had a grasp of what was presented in the previous phase.

Further discussions were held as to the dissemination of information to the community in the most transparent and honest way possible including the use of and explanation of the PCI numbering system described in last month's meeting. We will proceed with phase one and two and Mr. Herzog will not direct the Finance Director to research the levy process yet. At this stage, if the City were to propose a levy on the ballot it would happen in the fall of 2024. Councilmembers were asked, depending on their comfort level, discussing the topic with their neighbors or at community events, or sports practices. Members were also asked to create talking points that could be used in a community forum, and to bring those ideas to the next meeting.

The talking points, Q&A, etc. can be something that can be posted on the City's website and the website can be the source of truth, in case a resident hears something in the community, they can refer people to the website to prevent themselves and others from sharing misinformation. Additionally, the website can be used by Councilmembers as a source of information to share with community members.

#### Miscellaneous

There were no miscellaneous items to discuss.

#### Adjourn

There being no further business to discuss, Ms. Stankorb Taylor moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Woodside seconded the motion. By voice vote, all voted yes, the motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debby Martin, Executive Assistant

Melissa Monich, Mayor