

**SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES  
JANUARY 20, 2015**

The Safety Committee meeting was held on January 20, 2015, at North Royalton City Hall, 14600 State Road. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Committee Members: Chair Dan Langshaw, Vice Chair Steve Muller, Gary Petrusky; Council: Larry Antoskiewicz; John Nickell, Dan Kasaris, Paul Marnecheck; Administration: Mayor Robert Stefanik, Fire Chief Robert Chegan, Safety Director Bruce Campbell, Police Chief John Elek; Other: Jeff Paulus, Tom Ferrara, Tom Rembowski, Megan Bowery.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Moved by Mr. Petrusky, seconded by Mr. Muller to **approve the November 18, 2014 minutes as received.**  
Yeas: 3. Nays: 0. **Motion carried.**

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**1. Oil and gas appeal update**

Mayor Stefanik reported that the ODNR has appealed the Oil and Gas Commission's ruling. The Ohio Attorney General's Office will be representing the ODNR. Dates for the hearing are still pending and he will advise as soon as he knows more.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**1. 2015 Fire Department Capital Purchases**

Mr. Kasaris asked the Fire Chief what goes into the process of planning, building and paying for a new fire truck. Chief Chegan said that our two oldest trucks were purchased in 1995. How long a truck stays in service will depend on how much it is used. He said our average age historically has been about 20 years. He said that we do a very thorough preventive maintenance program on the three trucks that we have. He said one is a 1995 65 foot ladder which is technically an engine truck with a ladder on top, it's not really classified as a ladder truck. The other one is a rescue type body which includes all of our rescue equipment but still serves as a fire engine as well. The third truck is a 2003. It has more water than the others and had a compressed air foam system for those areas in the southern part of the city that don't have water. He said our preventive maintenance program has done really well over the last few years. He said they are getting old but they are functioning very well at this time. He said they are doing their due diligence in making sure that we get the full use out of these trucks. He said when one truck goes out of service we only have one left at each station. Many cities our size have 4-5 engines; we have done very well maintaining what we have. He said that he, the Mayor and the Safety Director sit down every year when preparing the budget and look at the capital expenditures regarding vehicles, which also includes ambulances, and determine how to proceed. He said when they get close to the 20 year mark, this is when we are very much prepared to make that purchase. If something were to happen to one of our vehicles, we could not quickly replace it. It is about a 9-12 month process. He said that we have been working on this for two years so that we know the path we need to take. He said that we might start planning for it in 2015 and will discuss this later in the year. Mr. Kasaris asked for a cost to replace one of the 1995 vehicles and would we trade in the old vehicle or keep it. Chief Chegan said that they would have to look at this in depth based on our potential run volume in the future and whether we want to have another spare. He said that while we have done well with 3 vehicles, the run volume keeps going up. There are always extra costs associated with a spare vehicle such as maintenance and annual testing. He said he is not too sure how they would proceed at this point. Chief Chegan said the cost to replace the ladder engine could be well over \$750,000. Mr. Kasaris asked if we have a fund set up for this. Chief Chegan said yes, it is funded from the ambulance fees. Chief Chegan said that replacing the rescue body vehicle would be less than the ladder truck. Mr. Kasaris asked Chief Chegan is he is comfortable that we will be okay for this year and at some time later this year they will start planning to replace the 20 year old vehicle. Chief Chegan said that they always have a short term plan for the current year. There is also a medium range plan that includes Future Capital purchases such as rescue squads. He said that we are in the medium range plan where the potential need is around the corner, and as long as we keep doing our due diligence with the preventive maintenance, we should be okay for this year and even into next year. Mr. Nickell asked if they don't keep the old vehicle as a spare,

would they trade it in or auction it off. Chief Chegan said that we would get the most value from trading it in. Mr. Langshaw asked if the Chief is planning on purchasing any ambulances in the near future. Chief Chegan said that he has given the Mayor and Safety Director a 15-25 year projection of what the departments needs will be. Unfortunately you never know what will happen. He said that the squads that we have now are only 3 years old and already have 40,000+ miles on them which is more than our older squads had after 3 years due to the increasing run volume. On the other hand, he said that these vehicles should last longer than previous vehicles. We normally would replace the old squads at a 5-7 year mark. He said that our back up squad is already 8 years old and our reserve vehicle, which is usually not stocked, is 14 years old but is only used in case of an emergency. **Remove from the agenda.**

## 2. Southwest Emergency Dispatch Center Update

Safety Director Bruce Campbell said that this center started out with just Strongsville and North Royalton last March, but since then we have brought on Olmsted Falls and Berea. Mr. Campbell said that the Cuyahoga County Public Safety Committee approved a grant in the amount of \$234,000 for the Dispatch Center and sent it to the County Council to vote on at their next meeting. He said \$71,000 of this is a 20% match of a FEMA grant that Olmsted Falls brought over to the center. The remaining funds will go to various other components and building more dispatch consoles. This will also allow us to bring our Fire Department onto the CAD system. This service consolidation has proven beneficial with an increased level of service to the residents. All the cities involved have worked well together to get policies in place and to address any outstanding issues. He said that we were able to negotiate a 5% reduction in our fees for 2015, resulting in a \$24,000 reduction of our annual fee. He said that the advisory board consisting of Chiefs and Safety Directors meet monthly and will begin looking at consolidating a reverse 911 system. He said they are looking at the county system which is a free service that the county provides. He said that this was a massive undertaking and there have been a few bumps, but it is working very well overall. **Remove from agenda.**

## 3. Regional Deer Control

Jeff Paulus, President of the Royal Valley Homeowners Association addressed the committee. He said there are 314 homes in the development. He said his goal is to be able to plant flowers in his development. He said he has lived in his house 20 years and over that time the deer population has exploded. He said that the problem is made worse in Royal Valley due to all of the common green space. He said that he can't plant flowers and even the arborvitaes' are being eaten. He said he would like something done legislatively to allow for hunting. He said that they could safely hunt in his development within the common green space. He said he polled the residents in Royal Valley and received 115 responses, which is a return rate of over 30%. He said that of these responses, more than 80% want something done about the deer. 70% would allow bow hunting and 50% would allow gun hunting. He felt that if we passed legislation permitting controlled bow hunting we could do something about the deer population. He said that he understands that it is a regional problem, but locally it is a huge problem. Mr. Langshaw asked Mr. Paulus if he had a copy of the survey he mentioned earlier. Mr. Paulus said that he will forward a copy to the committee. Mayor Stefanik said that he spoke with Mr. Paulus a few weeks ago. He said everyone knows that this is an issue not only in North Royalton, but throughout the region and this is why he said that North Royalton is taking the lead on this issue with the ODNR and we have already had a meeting in Columbus, with more scheduled in Cuyahoga County. He said that people are passionate on both sides of the argument and some of the most passionate people against hunting also reside in Royal Valley. This is how it is all throughout the region and this is why we need a regional approach to make it work throughout Cuyahoga County. He said the good news is that this is picking up some steam and he has received emails from the Mayor of Medina asking to join this cause. Mayor Stefanik said that ultimately we want the ODNR to recognize that this is their problem, to come up here and oversee the issue in North Royalton and develop both short term (such as culling) and long term (such as birth control) solutions. But if the ODNR throws this back to the cities and we find out that we are legally responsible for it at that point, then we may have to put this on the ballot and see what our residents want to do. He said he feels we are making great progress currently with the ODNR and we will continue on this path. He said we are not going to let this issue fade away. He said we are keeping the pressure on the ODNR along with surrounding communities and are hopeful of getting a decision from the ODNR this year. He said we just want to know what our responsibilities are in this matter. If the ODNR says it is the responsibility of the cities, we will tell people that they don't have to go to the ODNR for a hunting license; we will let them purchase a

license to hunt and we will make sure that we cover our cost through that fee. If the ODNR wants a cut of the money, we will decline. In the meantime we are going to work with them and try to come up with a solution. Mayor Stefanik said that he has some statistics on deer and automobile collisions in North Royalton that he has asked to be attached to these minutes. Safety Director Bruce Campbell said that he has compiled some statistics going back to 1993. He said that in 2012 and 2013 we were at 107 reported deer/vehicle collisions, and in 2014 it increased up to 130. He said back in 2012 the Animal Control Officer started tracking the number of deer he picked up which include deer that died by means other than a vehicle accident, and in 2014 he reported picking up 200 deer, 54 of which were fawns. He said that he also has a break down month by month of deer/vehicle collisions going back to 2000. He said that his department knows that this is a problem, but it is a very difficult problem to address. Mr. Petrusky asked how many injuries there were to drivers and/or passengers in the vehicles. Mr. Campbell said that we do not have this information included in these statistics. Discussion of the statistics ensued (copies attached). Mayor Stefanik said that the city did not start picking up deer on private property until about 7 years ago.

Tom Ferrara, 4861 Persimmon Lane, addressed the committee. He said that we should not lose site of the fact that the biggest issue here is property destruction caused by these animals. He said that the expansion of the deer population is geometric by nature. He said that both culling and birth control are probably the right ways to go, but when you are talking about averages, Royal Valley is at the top end of the average. He said he has stood on his porch and watched 14 deer walk down the center of the street. He said it is out of control and we need to move quickly. He said that Royal Valley has many other issues tied to the deer population such as flooding. He said they are trying to control the watershed that comes from Wallings Road and State Road all into one pond in our subdivision. We have had many organizations come out to help and provide insight, including NEORS and Cuyahoga Clean Water, and they have all said the same thing; we can't do anything about the flooding until something is done about the deer. Mayor Stefanik said that he has not heard that from NEORS. This is something that is part of the problem, but they are not saying that is the complete problem. Mr. Ferrara said that he understands this. He said that every tree in the subdivision is buzz cut to six feet whether it be on common land or on private property. He said that they have had flooding issues the last couple of years and this is occurring because everything on the watershed is washing down into the pond because there is nothing to stop it. He said that the Cuyahoga Clean Water Foundation came out two years ago and said that they could show them plans for plantings in these woodlands to slow the water flow down, but this won't work unless we get rid of the deer because they will eat the plantings. Mr. Nickell said that he encourages the Mayor to keep doing what he's doing, but there will come a point where we will have to handle this locally. He said that he has seen instances where large deer are near where children are playing and he worries about what could happen if the deer become agitated. He said he isn't fear mongering, but it's something that needs to be considered. He said that the deer, as nice as they are, are ruining the environment and some are actually starving to death. He said that he agrees with the statements made by the residents this evening.

Tom Rembowski, 4851 Persimmon Lane, addressed the committee. He said that he moved here 10 years ago and immediately noticed that there was a major deer problem. He said that he called the wildlife officer to see if he could get a nuisance permit. He said that the deer act like urban cows. They have no natural enemies. He said that nothing will happen with this problem unless we can do something locally in the short term. He said that he has seen 18-20 deer in his backyard and they are destroying everything. He said that their droppings are everywhere as well. He said that 12 years ago in the Cuyahoga National Recreation area there was a major kill off due to starvation. He said a disease went through them from drinking tainted water. He said that this is going to happen here. In Royal Valley, there are three watering holes for them as well as a food source, so this is why they are not moving. He said that during the rut season, the bucks will attack if you cross their path when they are going after a doe. He said that he is a mail carrier and there have been instances where mail carriers have been chased by the bucks. He said it is a very serious issue and needs to be addressed short term. He felt that bow hunting from an elevated positions is very safe. He said that there is a lot of land behind their homes where they could safely hunt.

Mr. Langshaw said that he grew up in Royal Valley so he understands that the situation is a multifaceted issue. He said that Council and the Mayor all support having the ODNR look into this matter. It is not just a local issue, it is a regional issue and we can't do this alone. He said that there is a lot of work to be done, but feels

we are on the right path. He said that we need to give the Mayor a chance to work with other cities, bring them to the table and see what can be done in conjunction with the ODNR. Mayor Stefanik said that we want the ODNR to answer us as to whether or not they are going to oversee this issue like we feel they should based on ORC and state law. A resident asked if it is determined that it is the city's responsibility will the city be offering nuisance permits to take care of this problem in small areas. Mayor Stefanik said that any plan that we come up with will need to be done in conjunction with Parma, Strongsville, Broadview Hts., etc., or it's not going to be successful. If a neighboring city does nothing, we can kill all the deer we want, but they will still come over from this neighboring city. We are trying to address this regionally with a common sense goal. He said that if the ODNR does not want to get involved with it, then we are going to do something. A resident said that North Royalton has more opportunities for safe hunting vs. cities such as Parma. He said that we need to address it and we cannot look away from it. Mayor Stefanik said that we are not looking away from it. We are going after this very aggressively. If the ODNR decides that it is not their problem, we will take control of it. He said that he will sit down with the Police Chief, the Law Director, etc. and we will figure out guidelines and we will handle it from there, but he wants this process to work with the ODNR. This is the first time we have tried this. He said 9 months ago it was just him, one Mayor. Now we have all of the Mayor's of Cuyahoga County and even Mayors from Medina County involved. He said we want to work through this process. Just because residents in Royal Valley are not happy with it, we are not going to abandon what we have done so far. Mayor Stefanik said that he spoke with the resident 2 weeks ago and told him that if it comes down to hunting, he will turn to Royal Valley and see if they want to be one of the first. Let us work through this process. He said that every Mayor in Cuyahoga County hears complaints from their residents about deer every day. He said that it is taking up all of their time and it is the number one issue in the county and we are going to stay on top of it. Mr. Nickell said that we need support from the residents for this program in order for it to work. Mayor Stefanik said that we will be up against those who are not in favor of killing the deer. He said that if this goes to the ballot, he is not sure how it would turn out. Mr. Kasaris said that Broadview Hts. attempted to tackle this issue a few years ago. Their City Council passed legislation but outside forces came in and convinced people to vote to overturn the legislation. He said that we all know there are too many deer in North Royalton but we also understand that we need help on a regional basis. He likes that the Mayor is willing to do this on our own should the ODNR not wish to help. Mayor Stefanik said that the deer lobby is very intense and they will bring videos and photos showing things like a deer with an arrow through the head falling over on a playground. He said this is a very powerful tool and it incites people. Mr. Antoskiewicz said that we have been discussing this matter for many, many years with no solution found. Finally all Mayors are getting onboard and making it a regional problem. He said he is skeptical about it working if North Royalton has to go it alone. He said just giving a permit to hunt to the residents of Royal Valley is not the answer. He said he is confident that the Mayor and Council will tackle this and get it going. Mr. Langshaw said he too is eager to solve this problem but agrees that we need to be patient in the short term.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Mr. Petrusky, seconded by Mr. Muller **to adjourn the January 20, 2015 meeting.** Yeas: 3.

Nays: 0. **Motion carried.**

**Meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.**