

**CITY OF PEPPER PIKE  
COUNCIL MEETING  
TUESDAY  
APRIL 22, 2025  
7:30 P.M.**

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The Council of the City of Pepper Pike held a Council meeting on Tuesday, April 22, 2025. Mayor Richard Bain called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:** Members Present: In voting order: Emmy Zatroch, Melanie Weltman, Jackie Godic, Jim LeMay, Tony Gentile and Cathy Hwang.

Others Present: Law Director Steve Byron, City Engineer Don Sheehy, Police Chief Karl Dietz, Fire Chief John Frazier, Service Director Jim Advent and Clerk of Council Sheila Brett-O'Connor

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**Administration of Oath for Police Officers Bradley Harbert and Bradley Fischbach**

- Mayor Bain congratulated Mr. Harbert and Mr. Fischbach and went over their position with the City and their valuable skills and qualifications. Mayor Bain swore in Officer Harbert and Officer Fischbach.
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Motion to Authorize the City Engineer to Prepare Specifications, Plans and Estimated Assessments for Belgrave Road Sanitary Sewer Improvements

Moved by LeMay and seconded by Zatroch to approve this motion.

**ROLL CALL:** Yeas: Zatroch, Weltman, Godic, LeMay, Gentile, Hwang  
**MOTION CARRIED**

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Motion to Authorize the City Engineer to Prepare Specifications, Plans and Estimated Assessments for Southwest Quadrant (South Woodland Road) Sanitary Sewer Improvements

Moved by Zatroch and seconded by LeMay to approve this motion.

**ROLL CALL:** Yeas: Zatroch, Weltman, Godic, LeMay, Gentile, Hwang  
**MOTION CARRIED**

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**Discussion of 2026 MCIP Application**

- Mr. Sheehy went over the MCIP grant application that is through the Northeast Ohio Sewer District (NEORS). They will work with the Cuyahoga County Board of Health on where the worst spot is. Mr. Sheehy said there is a pretty significant spot of high pollution at Fairmount Boulevard and Lander Road right by the Ursuline College campus. Ursuline College has a mini wastewater treatment plant that is permitted to discharge a certain amount of pollution into the stream. It would benefit the City if they could take out this plant, and it would become a pump station that can tie in additional residents. Mr. Sheehy

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believes they have a very good chance of getting this project funded, and it would be like the City's assessment projects. They could assess the cost back to Ursuline and possibly any additional homeowners who are included in the project. Taking the current plant offline would eliminate a pollution source that flows through 80% of Pepper Pike. It would be beneficial to the whole region, and it is a nice project that the NEORSD is very interested in possibly funding. Mr. Sheehy and the Mayor answered questions from Council about this project.

Motion to Support the MCIP Grant Application for the Ursuline College Pump Station Project

Moved by Gentile and seconded by Zatroch to approve this motion.

**ROLL CALL:** Yeas: Zatroch, Weltman, Godic, LeMay, Gentile, Hwang  
**MOTION CARRIED**

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Motion to Ratify Labor and Expenses for Emergency Repairs Performed by Nerone & Sons Inc. in the Amount of \$39,480.71

- Mayor Bain said this project was discussed with Council earlier this year after a water main blew on Fairmount Boulevard near Ursuline College on December 30<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Sheehy said they contacted Nerone on December 30<sup>th</sup> after the water main break, and they put together a rough cost estimate. Mayor Bain said this exceeded the \$25,000 spending limit of the Mayor. They were permitted under the law to proceed with emergency repairs. The Mayor said they are subsequently seeking ratification of the labor and expense of \$39,480.71 by Council.
  - Mr. LeMay said he just got these documents and didn't have time to go through them. Mr. LeMay thinks the Mayor should have some emergency appropriation money for when this happens, but he could not find it in the current appropriation document. Mayor Bain said there is actually an ordinance in the code that talks about that.
  - Mr. LeMay said he would rather defer this to get it right, and they may need to make some changes to make the process better. Mr. LeMay said there is a clause that Mr. Byron cited that states the Mayor shall notify Council of each expenditure at the next Council meeting. Mayor Bain said that didn't happen, and the Mayor apologized to Council for the delay.
  - Mr. LeMay and Ms. Weltman said they would rather defer this. Mr. LeMay said he would like to get the process down, and the Mayor said we will table this for the moment and put it on the next agenda.
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#### **Discussion about City Contribution to the Cleveland Food Bank**

- Mayor Bain said this conversation was initiated by Ms. Godic at their last meeting. Ms. Godic said the discussion she started at the last meeting was very spur of the moment, and after further reflection, she would like this to be grounded and tied to something concrete. Ms. Godic said she would love to see the City match the residents' contribution to the Mayor's annual Cleveland Food Bank Harvest for Hunger Drive. This would be an incentive for more people to participate.
- Mayor Bain said he thinks this is a great idea, and usually the contributions are between \$10,000 and \$15,000. Ms. Godic said this is nominal relative to their budget, and Mr. Byron said they are allowed to do this.
- Mr. Gentile suggested that they reach out to the Food Bank and ask them if they can give a targeted gift that would benefit people in Pepper Pike. Ms. Godic told Mr. Gentile to be clear that this is his specific preference and not a legal requirement.

- Ms. Weltman said she shared Mr. Gentile's concern since this is taxpayer money and it was raised for public purpose. Ms. Weltman suggested they possibly tie an event like the Taste of Pepper Pike, having a portion of the ticket price go towards the Food Bank as a way to fundraise. Mr. LeMay said he loves the local idea. Mayor Bain said the reality is they live in an extraordinarily gifted community, and the City does have food bank beneficiaries but they are few. The Mayor is concerned if they limit themselves to Pepper Pike families, they won't be contributing very much. Mayor Bain does not think they need to limit themselves to people in Pepper Pike in order for them to have a sense of public good. Ms. Weltman asked is it their role as a Council to take public money and divert it for a purpose that is not a taxpayer benefited purpose.
  - Ms. Zatroch thanked Ms. Godic for coming up with this idea, but she also has concerns that these dollars don't really belong to them. During COVID, they did a \$10,000 donation to the Food Bank but part of that was they were in a pandemic. That donation was intended to be a one off. Ms. Zatroch liked Ms. Weltman's idea of donating a portion of Taste of Pepper Pike ticket sales or collecting donations at the Ice Cream Social. Mr. Gentile said a fundraiser would be good. Ms. Godic said the Orange Area Service Committee had a table at the Ice Cream Social and did not raise any money. Ms. Weltman came up with more interactive ways to get donations.
  - Mayor Bain said the money raised from the Taste of Pepper Pike funds other City activities. The Mayor and Council continued to discuss charitable donations.
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#### **Discussion of Charter Review Issue 17**

- Dr. Hwang went over the need for a review of the Charter that was written 60 years ago. Council rightly initiated a Charter review and invited nine respected residents to lead that process as the Charter Review Commission. Dr. Hwang said the Commission's work was thoughtful, balanced and grounded in a desire for better governance, and Council accepted nearly all of their recommendations in good faith. Dr. Hwang went over the details of Issue 17, and she voiced her concerns that it has been hijacked by misinformation and personal agendas. Dr. Hwang said the conversation about Issue 17 has become clouded, and neighbors are becoming really polarized and unwilling to compromise. Dr. Hwang said they owe it to the public to make this the best document it can be for the greatest amount of people. Their job on Council is to listen to the residents. Dr. Hwang asked Council for input on why the community is so polarized about Issue 17, and should they pause and consider modifying the ballot issue or allow the community to have more input. Council went over their concerns about this ballot issue.
- Mr. Gentile thinks the effort has been robust and the request for community participation was very strong. Mr. Gentile said people who chose not to participate are the ones who are most negative about it, and it is all about perception.
- Ms. Godic said her opinion from the start was to delay this issue until November and give time for public input. Ms. Godic said she is happy to support the document as written, and it has a lot of good recommendations. Ms. Godic said she struggles with the timing of hitting pause now after people have already voted and all of the time and effort spent on this issue.
- Ms. Weltman supports what Mr. Gentile and Ms. Godic said, and she believes the Charter Review Commission worked. Ms. Weltman said the Commission and their work was robust, thorough, detailed and the highest quality. Ms. Weltman is saddened and disturbed that the Commission members' reputations are being smeared and misrepresented. Ms. Weltman said she is very supportive of continuing to go through with this very worthy effort.
- Mr. LeMay said given the information that is out there, they should let the Pepper Pike citizens make a choice. Mr. LeMay hopes they see through all of the noise and make a reasoned decision, and he thinks at this point they owe it to the residents to let the vote proceed and let them make their choice.

- Ms. Zatroch agrees with what everybody has contributed, and she has been very frustrated with the roadblocks that have been thrown in front of Council during the process. It has been exceptionally challenging to get information out in a timely and purposeful manner. Ms. Zatroch wishes they could have done better, and she appreciates the hard work that everybody put into the document. Ms. Zatroch thinks that they should let the community speak, and they will see what the results are on election day.
  - Mayor Bain said he does not agree with what has been said this evening, and the Mayor thinks Council is misjudging how dramatic these changes are to the lines of authority between the Mayor and Council. Mayor Bain said he will not be their Mayor if this passes. Mayor Bain said he ran unopposed in the last election, and he was elected with over 70% of the electorate voting for him. Mayor Bain said these are dramatic changes, and he will not continue as the Mayor of this City if Issue 17 passes, as this new role is not be what he ran to be. Mayor Bain went over his concerns about the process and said this has not been done right; something is wrong that they are changing the fundamental document of this City with a low percentage of the electorate at a May election that can decide the entire future government of this City. This should have been a process that extended and went on as long as it took in order to engage the community and make sure that all of the community had that opportunity and real involvement and knowledge.
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#### **COMMITTEES AND DEPARTMENT HEADS:**

- Mayor Bain said Finance Director Joe Brodzinski has resigned and retired from his post, and the search is underway for a new finance director. The Mayor said they have been very fortunate to be able to retain an extremely experienced individual to supervise for the short term their Finance Department. He is a former finance director who worked at some very large cities including Lakewood and Toledo. Mayor Bain said he will keep them informed on the search process.
  - Mr. LeMay said they had a Finance Committee meeting tonight, and they reviewed the March financial statements. There were no anomalies or quirks to report. They had a discussion about the existing cash accounts, and concluded that being in Star Ohio may be the better advantage opportunity for the City rather than some short-term bond funds.
  - Mr. Advent said they had a successful tree giveaway today, and they gave away 200 trees in less than one hour. Ms. Godic asked if they could get more next year, and Mr. Advent said funding for this program was from First Energy and they cut back their program. Mayor Bain said last year they gave away 1,100 trees. The Mayor said they anticipated having another tree giveaway in September. There was a brief discussion about this program and other programs the City may be able to participate in. Mayor Bain said Mr. Newell made a grant application for Phragmites.
  - Mr. Sheehy went over the work ODOT will be doing on I-271 in the City. They will be working to resolve problems with the express lanes and the Cedar/Brainard freeway exit. Mr. Sheehy answered questions from Council about these ODOT projects that will take the full construction season. Mayor Bain thanked Mr. Sheehy, Chief Frazier and Chief Dietz who worked with the Mayor to convince ODOT that these problems needed to be addressed now.
  - Ms. Weltman said residents have been asking her about AT&T installing high-speed internet fiber lines in the City. Ms. Weltman said it would have been nice to get a heads up about them working in the City. Mr. Sheehy said they have certain abilities to do work under their contract so they don't always give the City the full scope of how many crews are going to be out there.
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#### **MAYOR:**

- Mayor Bain had nothing additional to report.
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## **COUNCIL:**

- Ms. Godic said she was a City liaison for the people who organized the protests that have happened at Lander Circle. Ms. Godic said the organizer reached out to her to relay how appreciative he was of how responsive Chief Dietz and the Police Department were at the protests. They felt that any issues that came up were addressed immediately, and everyone was very respectful.
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## **AUDIENCE COMMENTS:**

- Manny Naft of SOM Center Road went over his concerns about surveys done in the City, the Mayor's attack on the Charter Review Commission and the Mayor's State of the City speech that Mr. Naft said ended with 10 minutes of advocacy. Mr. Naft went over the work of the Charter Review Commission, and he said they need to trust them. Mayor Bain said the advocacy prohibition related to the use of City resources specifically, and the State of the City was not a City resourced event.
- Jeanne Gascoigne of West Landerwood Drive told the Mayor you are a leader, and she thinks it is disrespectful for the Mayor to resign if Issue 17 passes. Ms. Gascoigne said she was really upset, mad and embarrassed by how inappropriate the Mayor finished up what was a beautiful State of the City address. Ms. Gascoigne went over some of her other concerns on what she believes are misinformation and lies.
- Bob Rice of Edgewood Trace said the City has \$20 million in the bank, and Ms. Godic's recommendation of the City matching the residents' contribution of \$7,200 to the Mayor's Harvest for Hunger Drive is a great idea. They are part of a greater community and there's people more in need outside of the Pepper Pike bubble. Mr. Rice said he appreciated Dr. Hwang's comments tonight, and he believes they should have had the town halls to inform the public before Council voted on the ballot issue. Mr. Rice said it is not the Charter Review Commission's job to pass or debate legislation, that is the Council's job.
- Vera Bartasavich of Shaker Boulevard wanted to commend Mayor Bain for being up front on how he feels about the ballot issue. Ms. Bartasavich went over her concerns about the Charter review, and she believes it was a bait and switch. Ms. Bartasavich said she tells residents who don't understand or are confused about Issue 17 that they just need to vote no.
- William Thompson of Providence Avenue said he is just fine as a Pepper Pike taxpayer with using a very tiny micro fraction of their money to help people in the area. They are talking about giving food to human beings in the Cleveland area from a very, very fortunate City. It would be a wonderful, uplifting story if Pepper Pike matched donations to the Cleveland Food Bank, and he thinks they should consider what the optics are before they make a decision. Mr. Thompson went over his concerns about the Charter review process, and he thinks the repeated mischaracterization of legitimate concerns about the outcome of the work product is somehow being blatantly misrepresented as personal attacks on the Commission; this looks like it is using the Commission to deflect legitimate concerns about the work product.
- Peg Hrynik of Shaker Boulevard said the April 2<sup>nd</sup> town hall was a circus, and the audience created such a disturbance making it impossible for Council members to speak. Ms. Hrynik said this was a public meeting, and the Mayor should have taken charge. Ms. Hrynik asked why Mr. Byron did not attend the town halls to try to explain why they're not supposed to give speeches.
- Gerard Bartasavich of Shaker Boulevard thanked Dr. Hwang for leading the discussion on Issue 17. Mr. Bartasavich went over his concerns about the Charter review process and Issue 17. Mr. Bartasavich said this is wrong, and the voters need to clean house in November and two years from now. Mr. Bartasavich said residents spoke at the town halls and on social media, and this is a disaster that has divided the community. Council is harming their city, and this has to stop and they have to get back to business.
- Lou Anne Graham of Shaker Boulevard said residents have made comments tonight slamming Council for dividing the City, but she does not think Council has the ear of the Facebook page that will espouse what the Mayor wants to be said. The Mayor stonewalled Council's attempt to put a rebuttal to the Mayor's

message on the City website because he controls that with his iron fist. The Mayor did not collaborate with Council as he did with the sidewalk issue. Ms. Graham thinks it is disingenuous of the Mayor to say he will step down if Issue 17 passes, and the Mayor does not respect his office. The Mayor has complete control and runs everything, and he has divided the City by his autocratic nature of running the City.

- Pepper Pike Civic League Trustee Heidi Arnold of West Landerwood Drive wanted to clarify that their spring event where the Mayor gave his State of the City address was not a town hall. The Civic League also wanted to discuss the two other ballot issues at their spring event, and Ms. Arnold went over these issues.

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Council unanimously agreed to adjourn at 9:36 p.m.

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**APPROVED:**

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Mayor Richard Bain

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Sheila Brett-O'Connor, Clerk of Council