

THE CITY OF STREETSBORO, OHIO
SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Monday, April 12, 2021

This Safety Committee Meeting was called to order on Monday, April 12, 2021 at 7:02 p.m. by Jennifer Wagner, Chairman.

PRESENT: John Ruediger, Mike Lampa, Jennifer Wagner, Chuck Kocisko, Julie Field

ABSENT: Jon Hannan

ALSO PRESENT: Glenn Broska, Mayor
Sara Fagnilli, Assistant Law Director/Prosecutor
Rob Reinholz, Fire Chief
Rich Polivka, Police Lieutenant
[by Zoom video conferencing:]
Justin Ring, Council Member
Jenny Esarey, Finance Director
Bill Miller, Service Director
Matt Glass, GPD Group
Tony Burgoyne, GPD Group
John Cieszkowski, Planning Director
Patrick O'Malia, Economic Development Director
Greg Mytinger, Parks and Recreation Director
Shawna Lockhart-Reese, HR Manager
Caroline Kremer, Clerk of Council

MOTION: TO EXCUSE MR. HANNAN.

Moved by Mr. Ring, seconded by Mrs. Field. Upon voice vote, **motion carried.**

Disposition of Minutes

MOTION: TO ACCEPT THE REGULAR SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 8, 2021 AS WRITTEN.

Moved by Mrs. Field, seconded by Mr. Lampa. Upon voice vote, **motion carried.**

Old Business

None.

New Business

Discuss Tornado Sirens

Mr. Lampa said this was placed on the agenda because there was quite a bit of discussion regarding tornado sirens on the Facebook discussion board. He said Council needed to address the topic since it

seemed to be an issue on social media. Mr. Lampa said he talked to Captain Grimm and Chief Reinholz who had a lot of information on the topic. Mr. Lampa said he felt the cost of \$48,761 for each siren when the City would need 9 sirens (almost \$440,000 plus annual maintenance) was money that could be spent better elsewhere. He felt there were enough other existing proactive ways to notify the public in the event of a tornado.

Chief Reinholz said Captain Grimm did a lot of research on the cost for different options. There were sirens, voice emitting 360° speakers, etc. This issue had arisen at various times since 2000 and there was money spent on a survey that determined 9 sirens could completely cover the City; they had originally thought 5 sirens might be enough but certain parts of the City would not be covered. Chief Reinholz said Kent, Aurora, and Hudson had tornado sirens, but they were old technology that was installed years ago and would not be heard well inside of buildings. They were tested monthly. There were different levels of alert: tornado watch and tornado warning. The sirens were activated by the dispatch centers, but when they were activated the dispatch center got overwhelmed with calls from everyone trying to find out exactly what was going on, so they really wanted to avoid false alarms. He said Kent had updated their system recently to be able to issue voice instructions.

Chief Reinholz said a concern he had was where would the people go, especially the ones in vulnerable neighborhoods like Camelot Village or the manufactured homes. The siren system was costly to install, there were many options to choose from, and there were associated maintenance costs. He said it was up to Council to decide what was wanted but there were other options for weather warnings from TV weather reports/alerts, cell phones, computers, etc.

Ms. Wagner said Twinsburg had 9 tornado sirens, which were set off by dispatch. The dispatchers were under strict rules regarding how the sirens were set off using LEADS and the National Weather Service. Every city had their own parameters for using the sirens. She also mentioned that the sirens were made for outdoor warnings and not actually intended for people indoors. She said even people outdoors usually had their cell phone with them; or if they were outside they could see the condition of the weather. She also added that the Twinsburg system did not send an all-clear notice, so their dispatch center often got lots of calls asking if it was safe now or what the siren was all about. Dispatch had to deal with those calls and also handle all the other issues of the actual emergency.

Mayor Broska commented, as the Fire Chief had noted, the time to react to an emergency was before it happened. The folk that lived in vulnerable locations needed to have a plan in place prior to any siren or weather warning going off. He said the administration could help the vulnerable people make those plans. He also commented that the tornado sirens were 40-50 year old technology, and everyone had cell phones now, usually smart phones. He said if someone felt they couldn't afford some kind of weather warning, they should contact the City for help in getting a simple, battery-operated weather warning radio set off by the National Weather Service tone. Mayor Broska added that with doppler radar and other more advanced technologies, the weather reports knew exactly what areas were in danger and which areas would be next. He said it was incumbent upon people to be prepared and be responsible to take care of themselves; the City couldn't babysit every person all the time. The City was definitely concerned with the safety of the residents, but the tornado sirens were an outmoded technology that had been replaced by significantly less expensive things that had better, more clear, concise information.

Mrs. Field agreed this had been discussed multiple times in the past and she agreed with the other things that had been said tonight. There were so many options for people to get weather information, but the key was to have a plan in place when bad weather was coming.

Mr. Ring also agreed with tonight's comments. He noted that Kent and Aurora and Twinsburg have had the sirens for many, many years and maintained them to keep them working, but to install them now at such a high price would be like putting an 8-track tape player in your car when there were so many better modern ways to listen to music. He felt the City could put its money toward better things.

Mr. Kocisko said this topic had come up a few times in the past few decades, usually brought up by older residents that were used to hearing the sirens in Pennsylvania where they came from, and they thought they were necessary, but even in the 1990s-early 2000s the same issues mentioned tonight were true. Now it was even more true because even more people had cell phones and computers with access to the weather radar. Even back then the weather radios were only \$20. He noted the sirens couldn't usually be heard inside the house with even more people using air conditioning now and keeping their windows closed in the summer/tornado season. He remembered the cost may have only been \$30,000 per siren back in the late 1990s but that was very expensive back then, and it was more expensive now.

Mr. Lampa agreed with Mr. Kocisko, but had just wanted to bring up the topic for public discussion because it had been an issue on Facebook. He appreciated that the City could help people find a weather radio if they did not have a computer or cell phone. He liked that a Nixle alert could be sent to those that had signed up for the messages if there was a weather event close to Streetsboro.

Mr. Ruediger agreed with the comments tonight. He added that even as a kid, the TV had constant weather reports when there was a bad storm. He said he'd also heard complaints from people about having to listen to sirens that were tested every month, so he also supported Streetsboro not getting tornado sirens.

Citizens' Comments

None.

Announcements

A Service Committee Meeting will immediately follow this meeting.

There being no further business to be addressed by this committee, and upon motion by Mr. Ruediger, seconded by Mr. Lampa, this meeting adjourned at 7:19 p.m.

ATTEST:

Caroline L. Kremer, Clerk of Council

Jennifer Wagner, Chairman