

**CITY OF READING, OHIO
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – REGULAR SESSION
AUGUST 18, 2020 - 7:30PM**

CALL TO ORDER

President of Council Cris Nesbitt called the meeting to order at 7:30PM.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Mr. Nesbitt led those in attendance in a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Council Members Present: Mr. Powell, Mr. Gertz, Mr. Lynd, Mr. Albrinck, Mr. Lindeman, Mr. Fischesser & Mrs. Eadicicco.

OTHER CITY OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Safety Service Director Patrick Ross, Treasurer Mel Gertz, Auditor Sabrina Smith & Clerk of Council Carla Kacher.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION –

Mark Bishop & Rich Surace (Energy Alliance):

MARK BISHOP:

Good evening everyone,

Thanks for allowing us to join your meeting tonight to discuss the electric aggregation program. I'm Mark Bishop, I live in Reading. I'm also Vice President of Energy Alliances and we manage the Aggregation programs for Natural Gas and Electric for the City of Reading.

I'm joined tonight by Rich Surace, Chief Operating Officer of Energy Alliances.

I'd like to start by giving little background on the programs, In October of 2008, I spoke at a Council meeting to talk about issue 19 which appeared on that November's ballot. Issue 19 gave Reading officials the authority to form a natural gas aggregation which Reading residents approved overwhelmingly. On May 6 of 2014, residents again approved a ballot initiative this time for an Electric Aggregation. After each passage, a required public meeting was held to discuss how the programs would be operated. The natural gas program started in the Fall of 2009 and the electric program started in March, 2015.

I field a lot of questions about gas and electric purchasing from my neighbors often about confusing offers that come via bulk mail, online, in local stores and scams by robocalls that we're all too familiar with.

I'm always happy to talk with you about specific offers, how to compare offers and how to avoid being mis-led. And sometimes people mistakenly think Duke Energy's default rates are kind of safe havens from the confusion and may offer a better or more stable result.

Since De-regulation was implemented, one of the goals of the aggregation opportunity is to simplify the buying process for consumers by offering a professionally run, well-planned choice for residents and small businesses in the community. A choice that offers price protection and stability during the periods when the market is typically the most volatile. This is something that Duke's default rates don't offer. Aggregation also provides the confidence that the program's terms and conditions have been vetted to avoid surprises.

With aggregation programs, sudden price spikes are avoided, like the Polar Vortex, and the enrollment process is automatic, so you don't have to constantly shop for the next deal before your contract ends. Many suppliers will auto-renew you or roll you into a very high month-to-month rate when your agreement expires. With the aggregation program, we manage the purchasing process proactively which is part of why Rich and I are here tonight.

So finally, why do we use an opt-out process? The opt-out process allows for the greatest participation to achieve the lowest aggregate price for you. It's not a guaranteed savings program, but we have a tremendous track record of results. We've structured our program to allow you to opt-in or out at any time with no fees with a simple phone call - or during an official opt-out period with the supplied return mail card. If you call us, we're always willing to help you understand your Duke bill and discuss how the options compare, but it's your choice. A permanent opt-out option is also available for residents on an electric aggregation

program. Remember, switching to another option, may lock you in for a time and prevent you from switching back. Participation and satisfaction rates are traditionally very high in aggregation programs that we manage in southwestern Ohio.

RICH SURACE:

Participants of the Reading electric aggregation program have saved a combined \$78,000, roughly 2%, compared to Duke's Price to Compare since December 2017

We have seen an average of 2,800 accounts participating in the program each month.

In June 2017 the Council signed a contract with Dynegy to lock in a price of 5.49¢ per kWh from December 2017 through June 2021.

To line up better with Ohio Revised Code 4928.20(D) that says an aggregation must give participants a change to opt out at least once every three years without fee, we limited the program to December 2020.

Because our programs have no termination fee and participants can leave at any time, the Ohio Code is a moot point. However we still need to abide by the three years clause.

Since Dynegy is the incumbent and already have a contract in place for December 2020 – June 2021 we asked them for pricing options through December 2022.

Please note that the below prices are indicative and would need to be refreshed before executing an agreement.

Option 1 (Tiered Pricing) – Hold the price of 5.49¢ per kWh for December 2020 – June 2021 per the contract already in place between Dynegy and Reading. The lower the price to 5.29¢ per kWh starting in June 2021 through December 2022

Option 2 (Blend and Extend) – Blend the 5.49¢ per kWh already under contract with extending the term to December 2022. The offer from Dynegy for the “Blend and Extend” was 5.39¢ per kWh.

Since participants in the Reading program use roughly 40% of their energy during the “winter” months and the other 60% during the “summer” month, Energy Alliances suggest that going with the tiered pricing structure will offer participants the best performance opportunity by locking into a lower pricing starting in the Summer of 2021 compared to locking into a slightly higher rate starting this December.

It is with this suggest on why we asked Council to approved authorizing a member of the administration to execute an agreement with Dynegy at any time for a price not to exceed 5.39¢ per kWh through December 2022. This gives us time to watch the market and work with them toward a lower price and take advantage of daily price movements and not have to time the price on a Council meeting which offers us a very small window of time.

COMMUNICATIONS

TOM BEMMES: We, the undersigned citizens of Reading, humbly request that our representatives on Reading City Council drop the lawsuit against our schools and agreed to allow the telephone poles in question to remain as they are. We the taxpayers do not want \$50,000+ of our money spent to move these poles and we do not want our money to pay for both sets of lawyers to fight over this issue.

I knocked on hundreds of doors, nearly 100% of the people that I spoke to agreed with this petition! Like everything else, COVID 19 made this process difficult and still we have over 800 Citizens of Reading who are requesting that this stop. Please listen to the people.

JENNIFER POWERS:

Dear City Council,

I am writing to urge you to drop the lawsuit against Reading schools. No one is questioning whether the poles should be there or not. We know they are a mistake. The question now is what to do about it. The poles are not dangerous. They are not an eyesore, as I am never even sure which two poles the argument is about because there are several poles in that area. It seems to be solely an issue of following a contract, and proving who's right. There are four options here:

- Option 1 – The city uses my tax dollars to spend \$50,000 to move two poles
- Option 2 – The school uses my tax dollars to spend \$50,000 to move two poles
- Option 3 – The city uses my tax dollars to pay a legal team, and the school uses my tax dollars to pay a legal

team, **and** in the end, the city or school uses \$50,000 of my tax dollars to move the poles.

- Option 4 – The city realizes that this is a waste of money, lets the poles stay where they are, saving possibly hundreds of thousands in tax payer's dollars.

You have chosen the option that wastes the most tax dollars. In the meeting when you voted to go forward with the lawsuit, I didn't even hear anyone ask how much it is going to cost. I don't know how much money it will cost to pay two teams of lawyers, but I don't want any tax dollars to be spent in that way.

In a time when the state budget cuts have slashed public-school funding by 300 million, causing the school to make budget cuts and let go of staff, and a time when the city council is debating whether our city can afford a new police car and water fountains, spending money on this lawsuit **does not make sense.**

I hope you will have the wisdom to look at this individual situation and make the decision that uses common sense. We did not elect you to spend thousands in tax payer's money to prove that you are right. We elected you to look out for the best interest of all citizens, and do what's best for our city. Please do so.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Powers, 2336 Hunt Rd.

JEREMY EASTER:

Dear city council members.

I'm a current student at reading high school and I'm asking you to consider dropping the lawsuit because the school is under enough financial burden as it is, so losing much more money would be detrimental to the education of all of our Reading kids. Thank you.

-Jeremy Easter

LEE KOEHLER:

I hope that the city Council will not pursue the lawsuit against the schools over the utility pole placement.

JILL NASH:

We support the request to stop the lawsuit against Reading community schools.

I helped to collect some signatures by going door to door earlier this summer. Every home owner on Oldwick Dr that opened their door signed the document being presented tonight - Residents do not want tax dollars spent on a lawsuit regardless of who is right or wrong. The overall response was that we have other more important problems than moving poles.

Thank you.
Jill

GAIL KAPPLER:

Dear Ms. Albrinck,

I have signed the petition that Mr. Bemmes is presenting at tonight's council meeting. I find it very disheartening that this City's council is bringing a lawsuit against the school in this community!

The children in Reading deserve to get a GOOD education, and adding this debt to the school's budget will certainly take away many necessities needed to enable their education.

I find it very upsetting that the city would take education away from our children to move poles. The beautiful school and great teachers are the number one reason for families to move to Reading.

Thank You,
G. Kappler

SHIRLEY NASH:

Council- I will be very disappointed if the city council continues its lawsuit against our school. \$50,000 plus lawyer fees is a sizable amount of money. I believe that money could be used in a much more beneficial manner for our community and its citizens. Please reconsider and leave the telephone poles where they are.

Respectfully,

Shirley Nash, 72 year resident of Reading

LISA & BRIAN KUHLM:

I received a communication from a friend saying that community opposition to the lawsuit re: the poles would be discussed tonight, encouraging people to share our position in an email to you. We didn't get a chance to sign the petition, but we would be very happy if Council would not move forward with this lawsuit. It's not our judgment of who is right or wrong — it's just dismay over the unthinkable amount of money that would be lost from that.

Thank you to you, your dad & the others for all your time & hard work.

Take care,
Lisa (and Brian) Kuhl

NOTE FROM THURNRIDGE RESIDENT LINDA WILSON:

Mayor Bemmes and City Council Members:

This letter is to voice opposition to the widening of Thurnridge Drive for the following reasons:

1. Increase of speed – current average speed is approximately 35 – 40 miles per hour. More room and a smoother pavement = more speed.
2. Motorists do not stop now at the intersection of Bolser and Thurnridge. More speed will mean faster roll-throughs at the stop sign.
3. Cutting down trees will be responsible for numerous issues:
 - a. Approximately 30 years ago residents PAID to have the trees planted in the tree lawns
 - b. Lowering of property values – houses will bake in the sun all day, no screening/privacy from houses across street, no neighborhood ambiance
 - c. No shade for houses - bringing an increase in utility bills and costing residents more \$\$ each month
 - d. No shade for those Reading citizens who are walkers (Thurnridge is one of the few streets on the hilltop with any shade during the day.)
 - e. Lack of privacy – motorists will have an open view of the houses, most of which have bedrooms/bathrooms on the front of the first floor
 - f. Lack of noise barrier – especially for those residents living near the new school (Trees help to mute the irritating whining of the HVAC system as well as the 4:30 – 6:00 AM dumpsters being emptied)
 - g. No light barrier from the street lights – again, most houses have bedrooms on the front of the house
 - h. No wind buffer as storms come across the hilltop from the west – wide open land at the new school allows for winds to sweep across Thurnridge
 - i. Trees provide habitat for wildlife (shelter, food)
 - j. Trees provide oxygen
 - k. Trees provide a barrier to speeding cars ending up in yards
4. Moving curbs closer to sidewalks endangers walkers, children playing or riding bikes and scooters, as well as pets being walked
5. Decreasing the size of the tree lawns will mean that residents will be forced to pile leaves, yard waste and garbage on the sidewalks for collection. This will then impede the right of way for residents walking or children riding bikes.
6. Moving traffic closer to the front of houses increases noise levels inside houses
7. Several residences on the east side will back out of sloping driveways directly into traffic with little to no vision of oncoming cars if apron footage is decreased
8. Currently there are residents that do park in their drives, but block the sidewalk. With less apron footage, walkers will be forced into the street to get around the back of the car/truck/suv.

I believe the City is not taking into consideration the best interests of those residents living on Thurnridge Drive; rather, consideration is only being given to motorists using Thurnridge as a cut-through street and a means to get to other areas.

Suggested alternatives to widening the street:

1. "No Through Traffic" signs should be placed on Thurnridge at the Fuhrman and Hunt Road intersections (like the sign on Maple Drive and the surrounding streets in Amberley Village and Blue Ash)
2. Through traffic should be directed down Fuhrman – a two lane street that has no parking, sidewalks are set well back from the street, and places traffic one block down on Hunt Road from where Thurnridge intersects Hunt Road

3. *Limit the size and number of vehicles allowed to park on Reading streets – vans, SUVs and pick-up trucks should be parked in driveways. (As a point of reference, Covington will no longer allow overnight parking on numerous streets starting October 2020.)*
4. *Implement an annual charge for on-street parking – the larger the vehicle, the larger the annual amount – providing funds for the upkeep of Reading streets. Residents will have a choice – pay the fee to park on the street or park the vehicles in their driveways.*

In the 33 years I have lived on Thurnridge, traffic has greatly increased, with larger and larger vehicles being permitted to travel and park on the street. I invite all of you to sit in my driveway and observe traffic for an entire day – speed, size of vehicles, number of trailers. I also invite you to rake leaves or cut grass on the tree lawn with cars whizzing by at 35 – 40 miles an hour.

As a Thurnridge resident, I do not recall being given any voice in the decision to widen the street. The project only became apparent when painted dots and lines appeared on my sidewalk and grass.

Again, I do not believe the best interests of the residents living on Thurnridge are being considered. WE are the ones who will have to live with the consequences of this short-sighted project. The street obviously requires re-surfacing, but not widening.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Wilson, 1154 Thurnridge Drive

COUNCIL COMMITTEE REPORTS

FINANCE: Anthony Gertz

- Will be meeting with the Auditor to discuss where various monies have been placed and whether or not it's correct.

UTILITIES, LANDS & BUILDINGS: Don Lindeman

- The bench project is moving along.

ZONING, PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT: Dave Powell

- No Report

LAWS AND CONTRACTS: Katie Eadicicco

- No Report

PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY: Randy Fischesser

Fire:

We will have our second reading of the ordinance to extend our contract with the Village of Arlington Heights to supply fire and EMS services for the next 5 years. If anyone has any questions about this contract, please feel free to contact Administration, the fire chief, or me. We will be voting on this ordinance at the next meeting.

Last week, UC Health launched the region's first Mobile Stroke Unit. A Mobile Stroke Unit is an ambulance specially designed to evaluate and treat patients with a possible stroke. The unit combines an emergency department (ED) and an ambulance to provide hospital-level care at the scene of the emergency.

A highly-trained team of four – a UC Health Air Care & Mobile Care paramedic, EMT and a critical care registered nurse, and a UC Health CT technician will staff the unit, and a Stroke Team physician will respond via telemedicine. This team can quickly assess the patient and provide treatment if necessary. The UC Health Mobile Stroke Unit is equipped with advanced diagnostic technology, including a mobile CT scanner and the clot-busting medication tPA (tissue plasminogen activator). tPA is the only FDA-approved medical treatment for ischemic or thrombotic stroke. The UC Health Mobile Stroke Unit is based at the Springfield Township Fire Department and is co-dispatched by the comm center for any possible stroke runs in their response area. I do know that their first run was to Reading for one of our senior citizens.

I would also like to note that Chief Owens was on the committee to implement this program.

Police:

Last meeting we had the pleasure of having Chief Edens in attendance to share his thoughts and goals for the police department going forward. I do thank him for taking the time to meet with us.

Police statistic for July: Call for service 1282 Auto Accidents 39

Booking: Total Charges 177 Original Charges 153

Citations issued: Arlington Hts 30; Hamilton County 6; Juvenile 3; Reading Mayors Ct. 123 Total citations 162

Three officers returned from Covid leave, all doing well.

Department held a patrolman's test on 08/15/2020. 20 of the 28 that signed up completed the test.

The new cruisers are expected to arrive in October so I will have an ordinance on the agenda next month for equipping and changeover of these vehicles.

This afternoon the Chief and I discussed several issues; one of which was the concerns with truck traffic on Benson and Columbia hills that were mentioned on social media. There has been an increase in dump trucks due to the two school sites being cleared and the bench project by VYO fields. Add to that the closings of Lockland railroad crossings and the problem is compounded. The department has increased patrols and have sited some trucks in violation. Keep in mind that they will not pull the trucks over on the hill due to safety concerns. They usually wait until they are on Reading Rd., so residents living on the hills probably will not see the trucks being pulled over.

SERVICE: Dennis Albrinck

- Windshield survey of all the streets in Ward 4 and will submit my suggestions to the Safety Service Director.

RECREATION: Tom Lynd

- Pool will be open this weekend, 8/22-23, and the weekend of 8/29-30. Normal weekend hours.

8/30 will be the last day the pool is open in 2020. Weather permitting.

NEW BUSINESS -

President of Council Cris Nesbitt assigned the petition submitted to Council tonight to Councilwoman Katie Eadicicco to discuss in her committee.

REPORTS OF OFFICIALS

MAYOR: Robert "Bo" Bemmes

- No Report (Absent)

SAFETY SERVICE DIRECTOR: Patrick Ross

- Has composed a letter for all Thurnridge Drive residents and plans on hand delivering to each household with the Mayor.

- Meeting with Reading School officials on re-opening traffic plans- Myself, mayor, police chief, fire chief, assistant fire chief took part

LAW DIRECTOR: Dave Stevenson

- No Report (Absent)

TREASURER: Mel Gertz

- August Financial Update: \$527,486.98 (\$3,500 short from last year's numbers at this time).

AUDITOR: Sabrina Smith

- Working with all the department heads to plan for the end of the year. Met with Patrick about the end of year payables. Will need everything by Friday, December 4. Farmer's Market Fridays from 4-7 p.m. at Reading Road and Vine Street Park Passport is back! 14 locations, free treat from Vonderhaar's once complete. You can pick packets up at the Farmer's Market, City Hall, inside or through the Drive Thru at the Reading Library, and/or you can call me at 513-733-4879 or e-mail at ssmith@readingogio.org.

READING OF RESOLUTIONS –

(1) A RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE THE SAFETY SERVICE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE CITY OF READING, HAMILTON COUNTY, OHIO WITH DYNEGY ENERGY SERVICES FOR ELECTRICAL

SUPPLY TO THE CITY OF READING ELECTRIC AGGREGATION PROGRAM. THE SAFETY SERVICE DIRECTOR CAN EXECUTE AN AMENDMENT TO THE MASTER SERVICE AGREEMENT NOT TO EXCEED 5.39 CENTS PER KWH FOR A "TRADITIONAL" ENERGY PRODUCT BEGINNING WITH THE JUNE 2021 METER READ DATE THROUGH THE DECEMBER 2022 METER READ DATE. THE SAFETY SERVICE DIRECTOR CAN ENTER INTO SUBSEQUENT AGREEMENTS WITH REGARD TO THIS PROGRAM, TO REDUCE COSTS AS NEEDED.

Motion made by Mr. Lindeman, seconded by Mr. Gertz to suspend the second and third reading. Motion passed by a 7-0 roll call vote. Motion made by Mr. Albrinck, seconded by Mrs. Eadicicco to adopt the ordinance. Motion passed by a 7-0 roll call vote.

RESOLUTION ADOPTED

RESOLUTION NO. 2020-34R

READING OF ORDINANCES

(1) AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE SAFETY/SERVICE DIRECTOR TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT WITH THE VILLAGE OF ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, OHIO

Ordinance was declared a second reading only.

OTHER BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was declared adjourned at 9:13 pm.

X 
CARLA KACHER
Clerk of Council

X 
CRIS NESBITT
President of Council