

The Utilities, Safety & Environment Committee

held a meeting on **Wednesday, February 4th, 2026** at 6:00 P.M.

Committee Members Present:

Utilities: Chair Mitchell, Davis, Oswald, Armstrong

Others: Lipian, Tollett

Excused Absence: Rothgery

Administration and Department Heads Present: Safety Service Dir Pyanowski,
Law Dir Deery, Fire Chief Pronesti, Fire Union Pres Marks

1. The matter of approval of meeting minutes from the Utilities, Safety & Environment Meeting which met, on January 7th, 2026, and circulated on January 15th, 2026.

Motion was made by Mrs. Davis and second by Mr. Armstrong to approve the 'said' meeting minutes as circulated.

MOTION CARRIES

2. The matter of the discussion of creating an EMS Feasibility Study Committee, with possible action.

Referred By: Ward 5 Council Member Armstrong

The discussion began with Mr. Armstrong saying the study got pushed to the side after we got it back in October, partly because they were waiting for the new council members. In his opinion, he feels we need to take some time to really dissect this study that we paid \$69,000 for. We have time, but the contract with Lifecare will end in February 2028 and we need to start looking at this report and dissect it. We need to figure out a back-up plan, even if we do or we do not stay with Lifecare.

There was also a study that was paid for in 2022, which cost the city \$30,000 and nothing ever happened with that study. Now that we have had two studies, we can't just put them on a shelf and do nothing.

He feels we need to form this committee to really have a understanding of what we can and cannot do. It's respectable to our firefighters and EMT's that have been doing this since 2017. We know they can do this, but we need to know should we, can we and how can we go about this. By forming a committee where everyone can have input, a committee of 5 or 7 members. The committee can collectively come up with ways for the citizens to feel safe when it comes to these services. He doesn't feel the city should waste the \$69,000 we spent on this and throw it away, that's a lot of money for anyone here on the panel.

Dir Pyanowski agrees with Mr. Armstrong that the conversation isn't over, we haven't completed the process. They have the report and it's time to dig into it.

This is one of those topics that seems to be continuously discussed. He would like to see a plan of what are we doing for the next five or ten years.

If we decide to go the route it would have to get set up and have it ready. He thinks a committee of seven members would be good, enough input and manageable in size. He welcomes the conversation and digging into this. There are a few things they are exploring outside this report and he would like to share once the committee is in place.

Chair Mitchell agreed for the committee to have five to seven members.

Mr. Oswald agrees with setting up this committee and he thought the committee could suggest names of residents who should be good on this committee. He's hesitant because we still have a commitment with Lifecare.

Chair Mitchell suggested that everyone on council provide a list of names that they think would be a good fit for this committee. It will be a commitment from the members that are chosen.

Mr. Armstrong asked if he can be a part of that decision-making process.

Chair Mitchell said this will be a community committee.

Mr. Armstrong said he believes that we need experts on the committee. He's thinking of the union fireman, the actual EMT's and Chief.

Dir Pyanowski said it would be his expectation that this committee would have public meetings which would be open to the public. And he would ensure that the opinions of the experts are heard. But by keeping the committee to seven and balancing it with; administration-himself, Law Dir, Finance Dir, 2 members of council and 2 residents. And the Fire Dept would work through the administration and their input would be available and they could participate in discussions. At the end of the day, the committee would make a recommendation to council with feedback.

Mr. Lipian said he was thinking of a committee of five, because less is more. But, if they go with seven, a good framework would be 2 council members, 2 staff, 2 medical professionals, and the safety service dir. as a designee for the mayor would be appropriate. That is a good spread of people and it's not staff heavy. He said he would not be opposed to serving on the committee, but that is not his choice, but he would like to see Mr. Tollett and Mr. Armstrong on the committee.

Mr. Tollett said he hopes everyone has read the report at least once by now. It's very important that we are versed in this, there is a lot of good information. The report and this process is not, in any way, an attack on our current contract with Lifecare. Some of the financial implications that are in this study shows that we may be in a position to move forward with looking at doing it ourselves.

Mr. Tollett said he feels nine should be on this committee; 2 from council, 2 from administration, 3 residents, 2 representatives from UH, (trauma doctor or someone who handles the transports). We should also think about a timeline of when meetings would take place, maybe once per month at 6:00 on a Monday before a Council Meeting.

Mr. Oswald suggested everyone hand in a list of who they think should be on the committee and from those names, they make the choices.

Law Dir Deery thinks in terms of structuring a committee you need to settle on the number of members and criteria of the membership before you can start throwing names around. She believes it's crucial to have Fin Dir Pileski or his designee who would have a wealth of information; like for startup costs, roll out of the program, capital needs, options for sourcing funds.

Mr. Armstrong said he agrees with having someone who represents UH, Dr. Singer. And the EMT should be on the committee, since they talk with the doctors. It needs to be people who know about emergencies.

Mrs. Davis said 7 committee members should be the most. She also asked everyone to not forget about the community. And one day we might have to go to the community and ask them for a levy. We will need input from someone in the community who has the best interest of the city in mind.

Mr. Oswald said that he thinks that we are more that capable of doing this. He thinks the number one issue is the financial issue, it's dollars and cents, if we can come up with the money is the major issue.

Chair Mitchell said that we are responsible to the residents for the money piece of it, it has to make sense financially. She is not in favor of putting another levy on the ballot. She won't do anything that jeopardize issue six, (2016 Half Percent Income Tax). It's all about the finances and what the residents are willing to pay for.

Chief Pronesti said there are two non-negotiables; #1 you do need Ted (Dir Pileski) on the Committee, #2 you need Dr. Jordan Singer from UH. At the end of the day, UH is going to say yay or nay on us having transport. Dr. Singer is med control, the overseer of all the fire departments in the county and some of Cuyahoga county. No one knows emergency medicine more that him. He also cautions that we are reactionary, because that's what we do. When it comes to this in leadership, this is different and they need to look at the big picture. Yes, the money is an issue, however, if we don't have a plan we will see this every few years, what will we do. The fire department is at a cross roads, they cannot continue to function in the way they are functioning without some discussion or a plan moving forward. And on top of that we are paying Lifecare for the non-transport. Elyria is the only fire department in Dr. Singer's domain in the UH Health System that does what we do as far as not only responding, but providing paramedic level care.

That is an unusual part of this that everyone needs to keep in mind. He suggested not bringing up the tax issue or fear. We just need to figure out what they could do, get a plan and then worry about that.

Chair Mitchell asked Chief what the cost of a brand-new ambulance would be?

Chief Pronesti said, probably \$350,000 to \$400,000.

To start the ambulance service, we would need five ambulances. Three would have to run 24/7 and two in reserve. Lifecare runs three and sometimes four. The committee will be important because discussions will take place and an expert might say Lifecare runs four, but they run five or six communities. If the ambulances say Elyria Fire Dept. they will only serve Elyria.

We don't know the start-up costs. We really need to start by establishing the ground rules and go from there. We may not necessarily need firefighter paramedics, we could have a division of EMS and Paramedic EMT's and paramedics that are under the umbrella of the Fire Chief and Safety Director as City employees. New employees would have to be hired. Firefighter paramedics will cost more than a young paramedic who may have just graduated at a lesser salary. These are things that can be discussed at committee meetings.

Mr. Tollett asked if the Safety Dir knew what was spent with Lifecare in 2025. There was a cap of \$400,000.

Safety Dir Pyanowski said that he thought we did not hit that 'not to exceed' number.

Mr. Lipian hopes we don't lose the experience of Chief Pronesti once he retires and Mr. Lipian is hoping we can have him on the committee. Mr. Lipian said Chief Pronesti gets receives a lot of respect in the department and he feels Chief Pronesti has respect and authority in the community and that leadership ability and that kind of authority would go a long way on the committee.

Dean Marks, president of the Fire Union. He thought the committee to discuss the EMS was going to gather information and present it to council, but we're expanding it so big and we're talking about a levy, I think we're getting ahead of ourselves. We still have a contract with Lifecare for 3 more years. These guys on the department are all experts at what they do. He was here when they were going to take away EMS from the Department and have Lifecare on their own. But Lifecare said they can't do it without the Fire Department. We (Fire Dept.) supply medics in areas where Lifecare can't get to. The Fire Department will always be there and they want to provide these services. This has never been about Local 474 making money. They have always reacted to the issues at hand. He feels we need options on the table. It will take union and admin decisions. The guys who go out on these calls and know some of the citizens by name are the ones you want on this committee. It's not about making the decisions, it's about them (Fire Dept.) giving the information, of how they respond. Yes, citizens should be involved as well. There may be grants that could be applied for to get ambulances for free, but that's the next step. He just wants the department to be involved to help so the committee can make educated decisions.

Dir Pyanowski said yes, the yes, the Fire Department will be part of the conversation whether they're on the committee or not. The new Chief and Lt. Bevan will be part of that conversation, their input will be there. The financial part is going to be part of the conversation, part of the evaluation as to how and if we go this direction. There is also a significant amount of information in the report that we can use.

Mr. Oswald said we need to be proactive instead of reactive, yes, we know we have some time, but, if this committee decides to move forward, it gives us three years to set it up, that is what we want. He appreciates that Chief Pronesti has gotten us to the table to start talking about it.

Chief Pronesti said if we get too wrapped up in the numbers for all seven members whoever they are, will have to have all the answers, but, the committee could invite members from other communities or departments to attend and explain how they do it and they could answer questions the committee may have.

Mr. Armstrong said he made this referral and he would like to see these people who do this day to day to be on this committee. Mr. Armstrong feels strongly that

Dir Pyanowski said that Lt Bevan knows his opinion is welcome. There can only be so many seats and we need to figure out that balance, which is what this conversation is about. Sure, a representative from the Fire Dept on the committee would be fine, but the point is that even if they don't have a seat, they will be heard and participate.

Chair Mitchell said everyone is welcome to attend the meetings and they would accept their input.

Chair Mitchell said now they will form a committee and asked what that looks like?

Mrs. Davis said she recommends that they have no more than seven.

Mr. Armstrong agrees no more than seven and Mr. Oswald agrees no more than seven.

It's been decided there will be seven members.

Law Dir said they don't need name now, but they need criteria for the members to be appointed in order to make the legislation.

Chair Mitchell's recommendation is; Safety Service Dir, Law Dir, Finance Dir, two members of council and two members from the community.

Mr. Armstrong said we should have Dr. Singer from UH and Union Representative and also Lt. Bevan.

Chair Mitchell said Dr. Singer would always be an invited guest to the meetings.

Law Dir Deery these other members could be ex officio members with no voting rights.

Mr. Armstrong recommends one member from the community and Fire Dept rep.

Chair Mitchell said the community needs to be involved because they need to buy into this. They have to be behind it.

Mrs. Davis said we need the input from the community.

Law Dir reminded everyone that this will be an advisory committee to full council.

Again, council can take advice from anyone else, even after recommendations come in. Council can request a direct report from Dr. Singer, the Union President, etc.

Again, Chair Mitchell's recommendation is; Safety Service Dir, Law Dir, Finance Dir, two members of council and two members from the community.

Mr. Armstrong still feels Lt. Bevan should be on the committee.
Chair Mitchell again said the experts can be ex officious but, not on the actual committee.

Chair Mitchell asked for a motion.

Motion made by Mr. Oswald, second by Mrs. Davis to authorize the creation of the 'said' seven-member committee which will include; Law Dir., Safety Svc Dir., Finance Dir., two members of council and 2 members of the community.
MOTION CARRIES COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

Mr. Lipian asked, procedurally what is the next step?

Law Dir Deery said Council will vote to approve this at the meeting on Feb. 17th.
And Utilities will meet on the 18th and make the decision as to who will be appointed to the committee. Council President will make the decision as which two council members will be appointed to the committee.

It was agreed that anyone who would like to nominate a resident for consideration to be on the committee, to turn those names into the Clerk's office

Chair Mitchell said that concluded this discussion and she asked for a motion for adjournment.

Mrs. Davis moved to adjourn the Utilities, Safety & Environment Committee Meeting and that motion was seconded by Mr. Oswald and the meeting adjourned at 7:00 P.M.
MOTION CARRIES

The next scheduled meeting of the Utilities, Safety & Environment Committee will be held on Wednesday, February 18th, 2026 at 6:00 P.M.

*Respectfully Submitted by,
Colleen Rosado, Council Secretary/Administrative Assistant*