

# Ward 3 meeting

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## Summary

- City Council President Margo Sommerville was not in attendance as her presence was required at the Ward 5 meeting focused on a WM (formerly Waste Management) request to build a [waste transfer station](#) East Akron. [City Council Chief of Staff Joan Williams](#) started and facilitated the meeting.
- Three speakers presented during the meeting:
  1. Sandy DeLuca from Akron Children's Services Agency to present details on the renewal of tax levy which is [Issue 40](#) on the November ballot.
  2. Akron Zoo President and CEO Doug Piekarz gave an update on what is new at the zoo.
  3. City utility coordinator Joe Kunzler addressed the residents' issues with poor and/or no street lighting in various Ward 3 neighborhoods.

## Follow-Up Questions

- If the renewal of the SCCS tax levy is not renewed by the voters, how will the agency recover and proceed with its operating expenses?
- Will Ohio Edison commit to project end dates for the street lighting project regardless of copper theft and power outages in other states, as the project was to be completed in early 2024?
- Will the new Akron Zoo animal veterinary hospital construction be open to Akron residents looking to bring their pets to the hospital facility for care?

## Ward 3 Council meeting notes:

Akron City Council Chief of Staff Joan Williams started the meeting at 6 p.m. Williams said Ward 3 Council Member Margo Sommerville would not attend as her presence was required at the Ward 5 Waste Management meeting. She introduced the three speakers and the meeting started with 20 people in attendance.

### **Issue 40, Summit County Children Services continuing operating levy**

Sandy DeLuca from the [Citizens' Committee for Children Services](#) said the renewal of

Children Services' six-year tax levy is on the November ballot as Issue 40. DeLuca said it is not a new/additional tax but a renewal of the existing \$3.25 million levy passed in 2018. The resident-funded levy is needed because according to DeLuca, "Ohio is one of the lowest funded services" therefore, additional help is needed from the local residents.

Passing the renewal levy is important because the money from the levy accounts for 60% of the agency's operating budget. On average, each property owner of a \$100,000 home pays \$68 per year toward the levy through property tax payments. Further, the levy is a capped levy, meaning the \$68/yr will never increase. However, if property values decrease, the annual \$68 will decrease for each \$100,000 of the property value.

"The goal/mission of the SCCS is to provide safety, permanency and well-being for the children," DeLuca said. If the levy is not passed, personnel costs will be reduced, and local support services will be cut.

### **Akron Zoo presentation**

[Doug Piekarz](#), president and CEO of the Akron Zoo, presented what is new with the zoo. Piekarz said the zoo is committed to Akron neighborhoods as the zoo's mission is "All are welcome." Piekarz shared some stats about the zoo: For every public \$1 spent at the zoo, \$8 is given back to the community through economic impact initiatives. The zoo offered 39 free admission days this year, through free admission days and partnered free admission events. These events provided \$422,000 in value of free admission given to the community, Piekarz said.

Here are a few significant initiatives and events at the Akron Zoo to be completed between 2025 and 2028.

- Jan. 20, 2025 through March 3, 2025: the zoo will present a public exhibit celebrating Black History Month by presenting the history of Perkins Woods. The exhibit is called ["Celebrating Black History in Perkins Woods"](#) The exhibit will explore the John Brown Monument, the historical NAACP effort to keep the zoo in Akron and the beloved neighborhood custard stand. There will also be local residents' accounts of Perkins Woods based on their memories and the neighborhood events that impacted their lives. The zoo will send mailers to residents soon.
- In 2025, the zoo will introduce electronic dinosaurs. Ticket prices will not be increased. The electronic dinosaurs will be located throughout the park and include exhibits to provide education on the dinosaurs, the reason for extinction and how we can save animals from extinction through present-day efforts.

- In 2026 and 2027, the zoo will open a [new animal and veterinary hospital](#). The 12,000-square-foot facility will be in the vacant lot next to Saferstein Towers on Diagonal Road. It's an \$11.9 million investment into the local community, according to Piekarz.
- In 2028, the zoo will introduce a giraffe conservation center to the park. The giraffe center will include giraffes, ostriches, wildebeests and a small animal exhibit. The new center will include several viewing and feeding areas to allow patrons to view and feed the animals. In addition, the center will include a play area for kids, restrooms and concessions at the far end of the park.

Joe Kunzler, City of Akron utilities coordinator, addressed the group's concerns regarding no and/or poor street lighting in Ward 3 neighborhoods.

- Kunzler tried to assure residents of Thurston Street, Nathan Street , Channelwood Village and Canal Park that the new LED Vernon Odom street light project should be completed by the end of this year. The project has been delayed due to constant theft of the copper wire required to wire the lights and unexpected weather conditions in the southern part of the United States that caused Ohio Edison to send crews to the hurricane states.
- "80% of Akron street lights are owned by Ohio Edison and residents should contact Ohio Edison with issues," Kunzler said, adding to call them at 1 (800) 633-4766 and receive a work order number for the service request.

Kunzler briefly covered gas safety and reminded the group that the fire department provides free carbon monoxide detectors to local residents. Residents can [contact the fire department](#) to schedule a home safety visit and to have a detector installed in a rental or owned property.

Williams ended the meeting at 7:10 p.m. She invited attendees to remain at the meeting to ask the speakers further questions.

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