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Ward 6 meeting

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Notes to reader: *Unless quotation marks are used, all text is paraphrased. If you believe anything in these notes is inaccurate, please email us at documenters@signalakron.org with "Correction Request" in the subject line.*

Summary

- City Engineer Joe Kunzler presented on efforts to address streetlight outages. He asked to be contacted (330-212-2593, jkunzler@akronohio.gov) for any LED streetlight outages so he can identify the cause and track the resolution. There are seven reasons for outages: the poles are not in the city's control, theft of underground wires, construction damage, rodents, mechanical issues, trees and careless drivers.
- After the [oil spill](#) that got into the Little Cuyahoga River in March was traced to a building owned by [SRP Industries](#), formerly RCA Rubber, the EPA and the fire department are pressuring SRP to improve the building to prevent future HAZMAT incidents.
- Summit Soil & Water Conservation District will host \$10 rain barrel workshops in the community. The June class is full, but the July class is available.
- National Night Out will be Aug. 5. There will be no ward meeting in August because of this event.

Follow-Up Questions

- Have there been accidents caused by broken light poles? Why have the city and state not made prosecuting thieves who steal underground wires a priority?
- Where can residents go to learn more about the contract negotiations between the city and safety forces?
- Why aren't more residents attending ward meetings?

Notes:

- On June 12, [Ward 6](#) Council Member [Brad McKittrick](#) hosted his monthly ward meeting. Ward meetings generally occur on the third Thursday of each month at 6 p.m. at Robert J. Otterman Ellet Community Center, 2449 Wedgewood Dr. [Ward 6](#) is the easternmost ward in Akron and is home to Ellet, the Soap Box Derby, Akron Fulton Airport, the Airdock and the Rubber Bowl.
- The meeting started at 6 p.m. There were 11 people, including eight in the audience.
- Akron Police Officer Eric Wagner checked in and discussed current scams.

City engineer streetlight presentation and discussion

- City Engineer Joe Kunzler presented about Akron utilities and provided a handout summarizing his comments.
- Kunzler talked about why so many streetlights are out around the city.
 - Reason #1: City has limited control
 - Ohio Edison maintains most of the unlit lights on the expressway.
 - The city maintains some.
 - Reason #2: More thefts in the last several years.
 - The city is slowly converting to LED lights, which currently cost the city more because the city is paying a favorable low rate (ESIP) that will go away.¹
 - The non-LED lights are not lasting as long as they used to, as non-major companies stop making them (now they last approximately two years; previously, they lasted about 10 years).
 - LED lights are on black/silver-colored, steel/metal/fiberglass light poles and have wire running underground feeding them electricity.

¹ See page 50 of [OE Tariff](#).

- Thieves are stealing the underground wire for resale.
 - The city has an ongoing sting operation to catch the thieves.
 - The city has installed video cameras.
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 - Lights are being left on to try to curb thefts.
- Reason #3: There have been more dig-ins cutting the lines.
 - For the next couple of years, there will be fiber network installations for community high-speed internet, lead pipe service replacements and water and sewer repairs (the city's pipes are from 1880, and there have been water main breaks), and other work or construction projects. When these projects have a backhoe dig into the ground, lines powering lights can be disrupted.
 - The city will require projects to run their work through any underground conduits, if available, to try to limit disruption to nearby lines.
- Reason #4: Rodents
 - Rodents chew on underground wire.
 - Recently, a dead squirrel near a light pole likely shorted out the pole
- Reason #5: Mechanical
 - On hot days, light poles will lose power if a new or bigger transformer is needed for the area.
 - City has older infrastructure
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- Reason #6: Trees
 - Tree roots can damage underground wires.
 - Lights on wooden light poles with aerial electrical lines are more reliable.
 - If there is a tree blocking a light pole, call the city if it is on a devil strip.
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 - Contact Ohio Edison if a tree is touching or near lines and there is a fire risk.
- Reason #7: Careless drivers
 - A resident raised the issue of LED lights installed at roundabouts.
 - Drivers going around the roundabout are accidentally hitting the LED light poles.
 - The resident asked if the poles can be protected with a guardrail or reinforced.
 - Kunzler agreed that drivers are often hitting the light poles during

accidents in roundabouts but didn't indicate that he thought guardrails or reinforcements would help.

- RECOMMENDED ACTION:
 - Residents should report vandalism to police.
 - Call 1-800-633-4766 (work number will be assigned and resolution can be tracked) if it is a wood pole with an aerial line.
 - Thieves aren't touching these.
 - This 1-800 number is better than 311 in this instance.
 - Contact Kunzler if there is a unlit LED light pole (black or silver) or a construction project that damaged the sidewalk and didn't repair it properly
 - Kunzler's contact information: 330-212-2593 and jkunzler@akronohio.gov
 - McKittrick asked Kunzler about a ribbon initiative led by Ward 2 Council Member Phil Lombardo to mark poles needing repair.
 - Kunzler explained the ribbons are provided by Ohio Edison and he said he would drop off ribbons to the council office for McKittrick to give to Ward 6 residents.
- Kunzler circulated a list of city events scheduled for the year.
- He asked for any complaints about city utilities. No one voiced any.
- Follow-up question: Have there been accidents caused by light poles being unlit? Why has the city and state not made prosecuting thieves who steal underground wires a priority?

McKittrick shares ward and city updates

- McKittrick updated residents on the [oil spill reported in March](#).
 - The oil spill got into the Little Cuyahoga River but was mitigated. EPA said there was no impact from the spill.
 - The fire department and EPA are pushing the owner of the building where the leak was traced to ([SRP Industries](#), formerly RCA Rubber) to have more protection for risks identified in the building to prevent another HAZMAT situation.
- Assessments for concrete street repairs:
 - McKittrick said more residents are complaining about special assessments for concrete streets.
 - Because of the unknown costs of the concrete repair/replacement work, the amount assessed to local residents has been vague.
 - McKittrick said residents are struggling when they're assessed potentially \$3,800, when property taxes have increased in recent

years and utility costs have also increased, especially when the residents are seniors on fixed incomes.

- Affordable (subsidized) rain barrels to water lawns
 - McKittrick said the [Summit Soil and Water Conservation District](#) will teach [how to collect rainwater in barrels](#) for watering lawns and gardens for the cost of \$10. Attendees will receive a rain barrel and connectors. He circulated a handout for a June 12 workshop.
 - Note: This workshop is full, but SSWD has [another class July 9, 2025. Register in advance.](#)
- National Night Out will be Aug. 5 from 5 to 7 p.m.
 - McKittrick said all 10 wards will have National Night Out events to have youth interact with law enforcement. Free event. There will be games, face painting, etc.
 - Last year, a downpour blew away canopies and tow trucks and firetrucks had to leave to make emergency calls. He's hoping for better weather this year.
 - There will be representatives from Ilene Shapiro's office, the Clerks of Courts, police officers and firefighters
- No Ward 6 meeting in August because of the National Night Out event
- The next Ward 6 meeting will be July 17.
- McKittrick shared his perspective on current contract negotiations between the city's safety forces (police and firefighters) and the city administration.
 - Police union (Fraternal Order of Police or "FOP") and Mayor Shammass Malik completed fact-finding.
 - A state-appointed fact finder found in favor of police.
 - City now wants the FOP and city to engage in conciliation.
 - Conciliation is where the police and mayor decide what issues to address now and what can be set aside for later.
 - McKittrick said the city paid for a law firm to assist with fact-finding and was unhappy with the result. The city is now hiring different firms to help it with conciliation. These costs without certain results will be in addition to the costs the city and the FOP must split to pay for a state representative to oversee conciliation. This cost will be \$298/day plus lodging.
 - The mayor had wanted an expert costing \$650,000 to \$730,000 to study APD's use of force. Council approved \$330,000 for the University of Akron to work with a consultant on a study.
 - McKittrick said use of force occurs in 1% of police interactions.
 - Primary use of force is handcuffs, which are required for the

safety of the officer and the person being detained.

- McKittrick is concerned that the consultant will cause the police to change their policies and be stricter than what is legally required by the U.S. or Ohio Supreme Court. Then, an officer could violate policy without violating the law.
- He is worried that stricter policy will affect police officer recruitment and retention despite the good pay and benefits.
 - Applicants are not the quality the city used to have because higher-quality applicants are going to the suburbs or smaller cities.
 - Police officers are retiring after 25 years instead of staying for longer.
- Firefighters and the city are at an impasse because the city won't negotiate with the firefighters until the contract negotiations with the police are finalized.
- McKittrick said that other factors affecting contract negotiations are:
 - The state pension system will be requiring police officers to contribute more.
 - The city will no longer have to pay state taxes for city-owned parking decks and lots.
 - Federal funds used previously to pay for the city's safety force officers in their first three years will be going away. (The officers' later years were paid for through attrition from retiring officers.)
- A resident asked about "[No Kings Day](#)" and city preparations for it.
 - McKittrick didn't respond directly. Instead, he said protests have been held in Highland Square, Cuyahoga Falls and Canton. He was also aware of a large protest at Hardesty Park.
- McKittrick discussed the changed political environment.
 - He said [Mahoning County prosecutors are reviewing](#) Jazmir Tucker's police shooting because the state requires the reviews to occur outside the county. He said he expected protests if the review outcome is not what some expect.
 - He mentioned that City Council meets in the municipal building instead of a larger, more open forum because of safety concerns and said council members now have active shooter training.
 - He referenced the mayor's recent State of the City address in Lock 3 and how they had to have standby snipers and SWAT teams to protect the mayor and attendees.

- The meeting ended at 7:20 p.m.