CITY OF LIVONIA – CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF STUDY MEETING HELD MAY 20, 2024

Meeting was called to order at 9:00 p.m. by Council President McCullough. Present: Laura Toy, Jim Jolly, Vice President Martha Ptashnik, Rob Donovic, Carrie Budzinski, Scott Morgan, and President McCullough. Absent: None

Elected and appointed officials present: Lori Miller, City Clerk; Carter Fisher, City Attorney; Mark Taormina, Planning and Economic Development Director; and Todd Zilincik, City Engineer.

Councilmember Toy led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

During Audience Communication Christopher Martin, Michigan Resident, welcomed Carter Fisher and shared information he looked up regarding Carter's birth.

NEW BUSINESS

1. REQUEST TO UTILIZE THE GREENMEAD PROPERTY FOR THE 175th, 176th and 177th ANNUAL HIGHLAND GAMES: Department of Parks and Recreation and the St. Andrew's Society of Detroit, re: for the proposed game days of August 2-3, 2024, August 1-2, 2025, and July 31-August 1, 2026.

   Cathy Hasse, Highland Games Chair, presented the request to Council.

   Councilmember Jolly offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

   DIRECTION APPROVING CONSENT

2. BLOCK PARTY AND STREET BARRICADE: Lauren Feigel, re: to be held Sunday, June 30, 2024, from 12:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. along the Five Mile Service Road from 36996 to 36916 Five Mile Road, with no rain date requested.

   Lauren Feigel, resident, presented the request to Council.

   Vice President Ptashnik offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

   DIRECTION APPROVING CONSENT

3. BLOCK PARTY: Nicholas Scott, re: to be held Friday, July 5, 2024, from 3:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., on Ohio Street, between Maryland and California, with no rain date requested.

   Nicholas Scott, resident, presented the request to Council.

   Councilmember Toy offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

   DIRECTION APPROVING CONSENT

4. BLOCK PARTY: Carol Dobos, re: to be held Saturday, August 24, 2024, from 4:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., on Cranston Street between Scone and Perth Streets, with a rain date of Sunday, August 25, 2024.

   Carol Dobos, resident, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Morgan offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVING CONSENT

5. REQUEST TO WAIVE THE DRIVEWAY ORDINANCE REQUIREMENT: Matthew Rowe, re their home on 36804 Sunnydale Street, to exceed the 25' ordinance and to allow the widening of their driveway to 30'.

Todd Zilincik, City Engineer, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Donovic asked Mr. Zilincik if the approach would need to be six inches thick and if the city requires the resident remove the existing portion of the approach or if they can add to it.

Mr. Zilincik said they would need a permit to widen the approach.

Councilmember Jolly asked Mr. Zilincik if the city will be replacing all the aprons since they are redoing the road.

Mr. Zilincik indicated they will be replacing the aprons. The homeowner could get a permit and work out an agreement with the contractor to widen it if Council approves.

Councilmember Jolly asked why they are requesting 30 feet and if there are homes with a 30-foot driveway on that street.

The homeowner said the new apron would be wider at the street and narrower at the top. Hardrock Concrete told him it would normally be 25 feet at the street and 21 feet at the sidewalk. He is asking for 34 feet at the road. There are quite a few homes in his neighborhood that have wider approaches. He has a 5-bedroom home and a large family. He indicated his plan would still allow a 3-foot distance between him and the neighbor's driveway. He wants the approach widened so he doesn't have to drive over the grass to get to the wider area on his own property.

Mr. Zilincik said they had a meeting with the residents and explained the process of the road program. He said the project will start on 5/21/2024.

Councilmember Budzinski asked if he spoke to his neighbor.

Mr. Rowe said he had, and they just wanted space in between.

Mr. Zilincik indicated widening the driveway does take away a parking space for the neighbor.

Councilmember Morgan asked Mr. Zilincik if the apron has to be pitched or if it could be squared off.

Mr. Zilincik said it could be either way, but it must be 25 feet at the curb and sidewalk.

Councilmember Jolly offered an approving motion for the Regular Agenda. He changed his approval to the Consent Agenda and indicated he will ask Administration for a Non-Veto after the June 3rd meeting so it can be done during the road reconstruction.

Councilmember Toy asked that this item be put on the Regular Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVING REGULAR

6. REQUEST TO WAIVE THE SIDEWALK REQUIREMENT: Brittany and Nicholas Onifer, re: for the newly constructed home at 15940 Ingram.

Brittany Onifer, 15940 Ingram, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Donovic confirmed that there are no sidewalks on either side of the street.

Mr. Zilincik said his recommendation is to not put a sidewalk in.

Councilmember Donovic offered an approving motion for the Regular Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVING REGULAR

7. REAPPOINTMENT OF IAN WILSHAW TO THE LIVONIA PLANNING COMMISSION: Office of the Mayor, re: for a three-year term, which will expire on June 9, 2027.

Mark Taormina, Planning and Economic Development Director, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Toy offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVING CONSENT

8. REAPPOINTMENT OF WAFA DINARO TO THE LIVONIA PLANNING COMMISSION: Office of the Mayor, re: for a three-year term, which will expire on June 9, 2027.

Mark Taormina, Planning and Economic Development Director, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Jolly offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVING CONSENT

9. REAPPOINTMENT OF SUSAN HARVEY TO THE PLYMOUTH ROAD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY: Office of the Mayor, re: for a three-year term, which will expire on May 16, 2027.

President McCullough presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Donovic offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVING CONSENT

10. APPOINTMENT OF RHETT GRONEVELT TO THE PLYMOUTH ROAD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY: Office of the Mayor, re: to complete an unexpired term, set to expire on May 16, 2025.

President McCullough presented the request to Council.

Vice President Ptashnik offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION	APPROVING	CONSENT

Councilmember Jolly stepped down at 9:36 p.m. to avoid the potential appearance of a conflict of interest.

11. WAIVER PETITION: Planning Commission, re: Petition 2024-02-02-04 submitted by Basilica of St. Mary, requesting waiver use approval to construct and operate a Montessori school and family/youth center at 18100 Merriman Road, located on the east side of Merriman Road between Six Mile Road and Seven Mile Road in the Southwest ¼ of Section 11.

Mark Taormina, Planning and Economic Development Director, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Donovic confirmed that they are adding a significant amount of underwater storm retention.

Councilmember Budzinski asked about additional greenspace.

The petitioner explained the added greenspace and indicated it was a result of the residents requesting a light shield.

Councilmember Toy verified that the State came in and looked at previous issues with water. She asked if there would be a play area on the property.

The petitioner pointed out the playground in the green space next to the building. He also indicated the school will be for age groups one to six years old and it is not limited to the parishioners. He also said they currently have a waiting list for the school.

The following residents spoke in opposition of the project:

Steve Johnson, 18240 Sunset
Steve King, 33950 Coventry
Christopher Martin, Resident

Mr. Zilincik explained the storm water management options at the request of Councilmember Budzinski.

Councilmember Toy offered an approving motion for the Regular Agenda.

DIRECTION	APPROVING	REGULAR

Councilmember Jolly resumed his chair at 10:06 p.m.

12. WAIVER PETITION: Planning Commission, re: Petition 2024-02-02-05 submitted by N.C. Designers & Contracting Inc., on behalf of Mike Alcodray, requesting waiver use approval to re-develop the existing gas station site, including constructing a new building with a drive-up window for a food-service operation, at 34901 Ann Arbor Trail, located on the southwest corner of Ann Arbor Trail and Wayne Road in the Southwest ¼ of Section 33.

Mark Taormina, Planning and Economic Development Director, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Budzinski asked if they will have EV options at the station. She also asked what type of restaurant will be there.

The petitioner said they may at some point, but EV is not currently in the plans. He isn't sure which restaurant will be in there yet.

President McCullough relinquished the chair to Vice President Ptashnik at 10:10 p.m.

Councilmember Donovic verified with Mr. Taormina that the ordinance will require they have free air, and the dumpster enclosure will match the building. He also verified that neither Wayne County nor MDOT will have to review the plans since it is under the city's jurisdiction.

Councilmember Toy offered an approving motion for the Regular Agenda.

DIRECTION	APPROVING	REGULAR

President McCullough resumed the chair at 10:12 p.m.

13. REQUEST TO WAIVE THE FORMAL BIDDING PROCESS AND AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASE OF AXON IN-CAR AND BODY CAMERAS, TASER BRAND ENERGY CONTROL DEVICES, DATA STORAGE SYSTEM AND RENEWAL OF THE 5-YEAR OFFICER SAFETY PLAN: Division of Police, re: to upgrade current equipment, warranties and services, from budgeted funds.

Livonia Police Chief Goralski presented the request to Council.

Steve King, 33950 Coventry, verified they are hip mounted tasers.

Vice President Ptashnik offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION	APPROVING	CONSENT

14. REQUEST TO AUTHORIZE THE IMPLEMENTATION AND COLLECTION OF A PROPERTY TAX ADMINISTRATION FEE: City Treasurer, re: in the amount of 1% on the School Operating and Plymouth Road Development Authority (PRDA) tax levies.

Debra Lichtenberg, Finance Director, presented the request to Council.

Vice President Ptashnik verified that this would never affect the residents.

Councilmember Donovic asked what properties fall under the school operating fund.

Ms. Lichtenberg explained they are non-PRE properties which would include rental properties and commercial properties.

Councilmember Donovic and Councilmember Toy are not in favor of this proposal.

Councilmember Budzinski asked how many properties would be impacted by this and how many are in the PRDA.

Ms. Litchenberg said it would be any property that is not homesteaded. She said it would be about 5700 properties which is about 12%.

Mr. Taormina gave the boundaries of the PRDA but didn't have a parcel count.

Vice President Ptashnik asked if this would need to be renewed annually.

Ms. Litchenberg said it would remain until changed by Council.

Councilmember Morgan asked what the dollar amount would be on a tax bill. He said Livonia has the lowest tax rate around, but our buildings are suffering. He feels this doesn't seem like an overreach, but he would like to see a number before deciding.

Ms. Litchenberg explained it would be $10 for a $1000 tax and it isn't a millage. It would be 1% of the school tax and it doesn't apply to their whole tax bill. The majority of communities levy this on all tax bills and we are only applying this on the school tax. She offered to pull the data and bring different examples to the next meeting. The agreement reached on March 8th helped them to contain their expenses. Had that not been reached, the schools would likely have had to ask for more in millages which would have impacted residents.

Councilmember Donovic disagrees with adding any additional tax to the businesses in our community and doesn't support this.

Councilmember Budzinski commented there is a $282,000 shortfall in this year's budget and this proposal doesn't affect the residents.

Councilmember Jolly said 95% plus of Michigan communities do levy 1% on the entire tax bill. This issue has been a struggle for Councils in the past. We find ourselves in this situation because of agreements from the 1990s that have become inappropriate to some degree. If this is not voted for it will leave a hole in the budget. This is a way of trying to affect as little of Livonia as possible. He asked Ms. Lichtenberg to provide the amount paid by the lowest and highest taxpayer as well as the average amount before the next meeting.

Steve King, 33950 Coventry, said he pointed out that the deal in March was blowing a million-dollar hole in the budget and this is what it is all about.

Councilmember Donovic offered a denying motion for the Regular Agenda.

DIRECTION	DENYING	REGULAR

15. REQUEST TO RENEW SOFTWARE MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT WITH SOLE SOURCE PROVIDER: Department of Information Systems, re: with ESRI, Inc., for the City's Geographic Information System (GIS) for a period of one year, from budgeted funds.

Casey O'Neil, Information Systems Director, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Jolly offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION	APPROVING	CONSENT

16. AWARD OF BID: Livonia Housing Commission, re: for the replacement of fifty-four, thirty-gallon hot water heaters at Silver Village, from budgeted funds.

Jim Inglis, Interim Housing Director, presented the request to Council.

Steve King, 33950 Coventry, voiced his opposition to old technology, and feels we should use tankless water heaters to save money.

Councilmember Donovic said the bid includes a permit section and asked if we are charging ourselves a permit fee. He also asked if they are 80% or 90% efficiency.

Mr. Inglis said this is being paid for out of the Silver Village Fund, not by the city, so there are permit fees. He said they have size constraints due to the structure of the building.

Councilmember Budzinski asked if tankless water heaters were considered.

Mr. Inglis said it was actively investigated and it would cost about four times more and this fee would need to be passed on to the residents.

Councilmember Toy offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVING CONSENT

17. AWARD OF BID: Livonia Housing Commission, re: for the replacement of four, ninety-gallon hot water heaters at McNamara Towers Building 1 and 2, from budgeted funds.

Jim Inglis, Interim Housing Director, presented the request to Council.

Steve King, 33950 Coventry, voiced his opposition to the purchase.

Councilmember Donovic offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVING CONSENT

18. AWARD OF BID: Livonia Housing Commission, re: for the replacement of eighty-one refrigerators at McNamara Towers, from budgeted funds.

Jim Inglis, Interim Housing Director, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Toy offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVING CONSENT

19. AWARD OF BID: Livonia Housing Commission, re: for the replacement of carpet at McNamara Towers Building 2, from budgeted funds.

Jim Inglis, Interim Housing Director, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Morgan offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVING CONSENT

20. AWARD OF BID: Department of Parks and Recreation, re: for Custodial services at the Jack E. Kirksey Recreation Center, from budgeted funds.

Ted Davis, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Budzinski asked how DPW would handle the loss of revenue.

Mr. Davis said if this is approved the money shouldn't be needed in the DPW budget.

Debbie Lichtenfeldt agreed with Mr. Davis, indicating he is correct.

Councilmember Budzinski asked how many vacancies there are in DPW for this specific job.

Don Rohraff, Director of Public Works, indicated all positions have not been filled more than once or twice in the past fourteen years. The times they have been filled, they only run at full capacity for a couple of weeks. They have continual turnover in these positions. They have tried a number of ways to recruit for these vacancies without success. He indicated they have approximately seven vacancies at this time.

Councilmember Budzinski said she doesn't understand how the city can't provide the service, but a private company can.

President McCullough said he worked with the bid process at the City of Novi, and it was one of the worst bids ever, once you sign a contract you don't get the quoted services. He asked what the starting rate is in Livonia for a custodian.

Mr. Davis said it is $17 or $17.10 per hour.

President McCullough said our neighbor to the west has no issues hiring at $17.50 per hour. When they bumped it up, he had 50 plus applications.

Mr. Davis said this has been an issue for more than three years now and they are open to solutions. He is requesting this as a pilot project. Sterling Heights gave a good recommendation for the company, LCG Global, that cleans their city hall and recreation center.

Councilmember Jolly said he understands the need to provide services at the recreation center and asked if the current custodians affected by this are in Local192 and if the Union is ok with this.

Mr. Rohraff said the Union is aware, and he has spoken with them multiple times over the years. The discussion of Parks and Recreation came up over a year ago. The Recreation Center and Livonia Police Department are the hardest to staff because they always require both a male and female. He said no one would be losing their jobs, it would allow him to put a second person in buildings that now only have one person. Buildings are currently being cleaned at a bare minimum and this will allow his staff to do more thorough jobs.

Councilmember Donovic asked if there are exit clauses in the event that they do not do a good job. He also asked if this would need to be renegotiated to include the new senior wellness center. He also confirmed the idea is not to eliminate any current custodial positions.

Mr. Davis said we can terminate at any time for cause. He feels we may need to renegotiate including the new senior wellness center since we don't know what the full needs at this time.

Councilmember Morgan verified background checks will be done.

Lindsay Szwejkowski, Local 192 President, said it will eventually reduce the number of staff since the plan is to not refill positions as people move on or retire. She feels custodial is a recruitment ground for DPW as nearly half of their staff started in custodial positions. She did agree that it has gotten harder to fill these positions. She asked if our wage is comparable to other communities.

President McCullough said he will not be supporting this.

Thomas Stadler, Livonia resident and employee, indicated he started out as custodial and feels this is a sad situation.

Councilmember Budzinski appreciates this but is frustrated as a taxpayer that the city has the inability to maintain buildings and has staffing issues. She is asking the Administration to propose some lasting long-term solutions for this and other issues throughout the city.

Mr. Davis said the cost difference for one year is one thousand dollars for the proposed contract.

Councilmember Toy offered an approving motion for the Regular Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVING REGULAR

21. REQUEST FOR CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE AMENDMENT: Department of Parks and Recreation, re: to amend Chapter 8.24.050 (Keeping wild animals, birds and bees) in order to allow for introducing bee hives on park property for educational purposes.

Ted Davis, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Jolly offered an approving motion for the Regular Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVING REGULAR

22. REQUEST TO ADJUST WATER AND SEWER CONSUMPTION RATES, INDUSTRIAL SURCHARGE RATE AND INDUSTRIAL WASTE CONTROL CHARGE: Public Works Division, re: to become effective on July 1, 2024.

Councilmember Donovic offered a motion to refer this item to the Capital Outlay and Infrastructure Committee.

DIRECTION APPROVING CONSENT

23. AWARD OF CONTRACT: Engineering Division, re: for the 2024 Water Main Replacement Project, Westfield Avenue and Harrison Road, from the Unexpended Fund Balance of the Water and Sewer Fund, to be reimbursed by the proceeds of the Drinking Water Revolving Fund Revenue Bonds.

Todd Zilincik, City Engineer, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Jolly offered an approving motion for the Regular Agenda.

DIRECTION	APPROVING	REGULAR

24. PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE LIVONIA CODE OF ORDINANCES, AS AMENDED: Department of Law, re: to Title 2, Chapter 23 (Department of Information Systems), in order to remove the role of the Director of Finance in the responsibility for management of the Director of Information Systems.

Councilmember Jolly offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION	APPROVING	CONSENT

AUDIENCE COMMUNICATION

Adjourned at 11:36 p.m.
For the Regular Meeting of June 3, 2024. LORI L. MILLER, CITY CLERK