CITY OF LIVONIA – CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF STUDY MEETING HELD SEPTEMBER 9, 2024

Meeting was called to order at 8:18 p.m. by Council President McCullough. Present: Jim Jolly, Vice President Martha Ptashnik, Rob Donovic, Carrie Budzinski, Scott Morgan, Laura Toy, and President McCullough. Absent: None.

Elected and appointed officials present: Eric Goldstein, Assistant City Attorney; Mark Taormina, Planning and Economic Development Director; and Todd Zilincik, City Engineer.

Councilmember Jolly led the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

There was no Audience Communication.

Councilmember Toy reminded everyone of the Bentley Dedication on Sunday, September 15, 2024. She also indicated DTE would be holding an informative meeting at Riley School on Thursday, September 12, 2024. She also wished President McCullough a happy birthday.

NEW BUSINESS

1. BLOCK PARTY: Sam Plymale, re: to be held Saturday, October 5, 2024, from 12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Sherwood Street, between Woodside and Westbrook Streets, with a rain date of Sunday, October 6, 2024.

   Jake Vargo, 15613 Woodside Street, presented the request to Council.

   Councilmember Toy offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

   DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

2. BLOCK PARTY: Stephanie Estereicher, re: to be held Sunday, October 20, 2024, from 12:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m., on Bretton Drive between Norwich and Pollyanna Streets.

   Stephanie Estereicher, petitioner, presented the request to Council.

   Councilmember Morgan offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

   DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

3. REQUEST TO APPROVE AND RECOGNIZE THE CLARENCEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL HOMECOMING PARADE, PARADE ROUTE, THE CLOSING OF CERTAIN CITY STREETS AND REQUEST TO DESIGNATE AND AUTHORIZE SENIOR POLICE OFFICER MICHAEL ARAKELIAN TO SIGN THE WAYNE COUNTY ROAD COMMISSION PERMIT ON BEHALF OF THE CITY TO CLOSE A PORTION OF MIDDLEBELT ROAD, WITH THE CITY TO ASSUME LIABILITY FOR ANY DAMAGE CLAIMS WHICH MAY ARISE AS A RESULT OF THE ROAD CLOSURE: Kevin Murphy, Athletic Director, re: to be held on Friday, October 11, 2024, beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Megan Fitzgerald, Clarenceville High School teacher, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Donovic offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

4. WAIVER PETITION: Planning Commission, re: Petition 2024-07-08-04, submitted by Wine Palace, to construct an addition to the existing retail building at 13971 Middlebelt Road, located on the west side of Middlebelt Road between Schoolcraft Road and Lyndon Avenue in the Southeast ¼ of Section 23.

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

Clifton Denha, owner, was present to answer questions.

Councilmember Donovic verified the exterior façade will match the current façade.

Councilmember Toy said it is nice to see a family-owned business expanding in Livonia.

Vice President Ptashnik asked if the digital sign would be relocated and if there would be a change to the driveway entrance from Middlebelt.

Mr. Denha said the sign and driveway will remain the same. The parking lot will eventually be enlarged.

Councilmember Donovic offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

5. WAIVER PETITION: Planning Commission, re: Petition 2024-07-08-05 submitted by Impact Ventures Corp., on behalf of Wendy's, requesting to reconfigure the parking lot and drive-thru facilities and remodel the interior and exterior of the restaurant, at 34450 Plymouth Road, located on the northwest corner of Plymouth and Stark Roads in the Southwest ¼ of Section 28.

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

Councilmember Jolly is in support of this project.

Vice President Ptashnik asked about the tree in front, the driveways, and walkability.

Joe Caine, Fieldstone Architecture, indicated the tree on Plymouth Road will remain for now. They plan to petition MDOT and the City of Livonia for removal of the landscape island. He said the existing driveways will stay and there will be walkability in front of the building.

Councilmember Donovic indicated he hopes they will remove the weeds and asked about removing the landscaping bed. He confirmed the PRDA will be involved in the front landscape plan.

Councilmember Budzinski verified there will be bike racks.

Councilmember Donovic asked if the Engineering Department could assist them with MDOT.

David Lear, Assistant City Engineer, indicated they will.

Mr. Kane said they need MDOT and City approval to remove the landscaping bed.

Councilmember Toy offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

6. APPOINTMENT OF DAVID VESELENAK TO THE PLYMOUTH ROAD DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY: Office of the Mayor, re: for a three-year term, which will expire on May 16, 2027.

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

Councilmember Jolly offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

Mr. Veselenak indicated he is happy to be a part of the Plymouth Road Development Authority.

DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

7. REQUEST TO APPROVE THE REVISED FEE WAIVER POLICY GRID: Office of the Mayor, re: in order to make it more user-friendly and less susceptible to Constitutional challenges.

Eric Goldstein, Assistant City Attorney, presented the request to Council.

Vice President Ptashnik said the proposed grid is much easier to understand.

Councilmember Toy said there was a lot of confusion when this was initially created.

Councilmember Jolly stressed this is proactive work and will save money in the long run.

President McCullough asked them to consider adjusting fees for non-profit groups.

Mr. Goldstein said they considered discounts but aren't including this.

Councilmember Donovic asked how organizations get their name added to the lists.

Mr. Goldstein indicated the groups listed are to be used as examples of group types and the intention is to see what categories one fits in.

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

DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

8. REQUEST TO AMEND COUNCIL RESOLUTION 72-21: Division of Police, re: to reflect the approved amount of the agreement with Hegira Health as an annual spending limit and amend the account that will be utilized, from budgeted funds.

Captain Yon, Livonia Police Department, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Donovic asked how the program is going. He also shared concerns about approving an item with annual renewals.

Captain Yon indicated this began in December of 2020 and it has been a fabulous program. He also indicated this isn't a request to renew the agreement with Hegira annually but rather to change the ledger account the item comes from annually.

Councilmember Budzinski asked Captain Yon to share the circumstances this is used for and if this job would require additional staffing.

Captain Yon indicated the Social Worker rides around with our officers. He is also equipped with a radio which allows him to respond to mental health crisis runs when he is away from the office. He also follows up on mental health runs to assist the individuals after the initial crisis. He said the Social Worker is able to handle the current workload but there are funds in the budget to expand the staff in the future.

Councilmember Jolly indicated treating mental health crisis during the event is beneficial to everyone.

Councilmember Morgan offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

9. REQUEST TO ACCEPT FY2023 FEMA ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTER GRANT (AFG) AND AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASE OF THERMAL IMAGER EQUIPMENT: Livonia Fire and Rescue, re: in order to enhance emergency response capabilities, from grant and budgeted funds.

Fire Fighter McKee, Livonia Fire Department, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Morgan offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

10. REQUEST TO ACCEPT MI LEO FY 2024 FIRE GEAR GRANT AND AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASE OF TURNOUT GEAR AND BOOTS: Livonia Fire and Rescue, re: in order to enhance firefighter safety, from grant and budgeted funds.

Fire Fighter McKee, Livonia Fire Department, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Donovic offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

11. REQUEST FOR COUNCIL APPROVAL ON PROPOSED LOT SPLIT: Department of Assessment, re: for the property located on the NE corner of Schoolcraft Road and Richfield Ave., West of Newburgh Rd., in the Southeast 1/4 of Section 19; 37500 Schoolcraft Road (Petition 2024-07-LS-07) and to waive the deficiency in lot area for both Parcels "A" and "B".

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

Councilmember Donovic indicated the lots are located off Schoolcraft and are part of two lots. He feels this makes sense to approve this plan.

Councilmember Morgan confirmed there would be trees or a berm along Schoolcraft for noise reduction.

Councilmember Budzinski asked Mr. Veri, Petitioner, if he has spoken to neighbors. The petitioner indicated he spoke to one neighbor who approves of the plan.

Councilmember Morgan offered an approving motion for the Regular Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVED REGULAR

12. REQUEST TO ESTABLISH NEW CLASSIFICATION: Civil Service Department, re: for the position of a Budget & Fiscal Services Manager.

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

President McCullough said he appreciates the process improvements that Mrs. Lichtenberg has brought to the Finance Department.

Councilmember Morgan asked how many employees Mrs. Lichtenberg oversees and if we really need to add another person.

Mrs. Lichtenberg indicated she oversees 17 employees. There are many processes that need to be updated, and this will be possible with the right people in the right seats. She said this will be a value-added position that will bring additional transparency and reporting complexity to Council.

Councilmember Morgan asked if this a prudent thing to do while we are under a budget crunch.

Vice President Ptashnik asked if we will be eliminating or consolidating for this additional position. She asked if the goal here is to spend money to save money and who is handling these responsibilities now.

Mrs. Lichtenberg said it is another set of eyes giving a high-level overview to see if we are saving money or can consolidate things we are doing. Finance is really a recording what has happened, and they need an accurate forecast of what is coming to allow for savings and be proactive. She shared that this would save money and allow operations that currently aren't being done to be handled.

Councilmember Toy asked if other Municipalities utilize people like this. She also asked if this would help evaluate future budgets.

Mrs. Lichtenberg said she had two full time budget analysts at her previous employer which was a city smaller than Livonia. Also, many cities have dedicated budget staff including a Budget Director. This person would be able to help evaluate future budgets. She said she has a very strong team, but additional resources are needed to continue to move forward. She indicated that much of her staff is customer service oriented.

Councilmember Budzinski thanked Mrs. Lichtenberg for the explanation, and she is supportive of this position.

Councilmember Donovic asked where the money will come from. He also asked about the pay range being $70,000 to $90,000 based on step increases and asked if anything different would have to go before Council again.

Mrs. Lichtenberg indicated the funds will be split equally between the General Fund and the Water and Sewer Fund. This will provide the reporting and forecasting for the Finance Department. This will enhance her ability to ensure that dollars are spent appropriately in this community.

Vice President Ptashnik asked if there is any risk using the dollars from the two funds. She also asked if there are other areas that will be cut to help pay for this.

Mrs. Lichtenberg said there is no risk, it is appropriate. There are some areas of the budget that have been adjusted to allow for this position.

Councilmember Morgan asked how many accountants are in the Finance Department.

Mrs. Lichtenberg indicated there are a total of five, three accountants along with a Chief Accountant and a Deputy Chief Accountant. The position requested would be classified as a Budget Manager. The Civil Service Structure includes the classification of a Budget Director which would be a higher-level position at a higher pay scale. She feels the Budget Manager position will be a better fit.

President McCullough spoke about having a new Finance Director with a new vision and stated our current budget is very antiquated.

Councilmember Donovic commented that we are creating a position like a Budget Manager position at a lower level. He asked how this will save us money.

Mrs. Lichtenberg said she felt the main reason for not bringing the Budget Director position in is because there are a lot of processes that need to evolve, and she would like to promote from within. She has a highly qualified professional that is already a part of the Livonia organization and a key staff member. With the right training and development, we will continue to move the team forward. This position will assist with Grants, the Purchasing Director, and helping with the advancements with Capital Management. She said we will use the economies of scale, for example if a parking lot is being bid out and another one will be needed elsewhere, both will bid out together and this would save money.

Councilmember Donovic hopes they can somehow quantify the savings.

Councilmember Morgan said he feels these questions are all reasonable since he feels Council has never approved any position such as this without this type of questioning.

Councilmember Budzinski offered an approving motion for the Regular Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVED REGULAR

13. REQUEST TO WAIVE THE SEALED BID PROCESS AND APPROVE AN AGREEMENT WITH TYLER TECHNOLOGIES (TYLER PAYMENTS): Finance Department, re: for credit card and eCheck payment software, hardware, and support, from budgeted funds.

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

Vice President Ptashnik asked if there would also be point of sale, for example, a dog license. She also asked if the plan is to consolidate across the board and what the definition of a slight increase is.

Mrs. Lichtenberg said the Clerk and the Treasurer's Offices use a company that is more compatible with BS&A Software. She would like to consolidate but we couldn't give the same level of service without adding another $20,000 to $30,000 to this proposal. She indicated the increase is about $4,000 on $172,000 a year.

Councilmember Toy said we got money back when we started using American Express in the past. She asked if we benefit in any way now.

Mrs. Lichtenberg said American Express is the most expensive card we accept. If someone pays with a bare bone visa compared to a reward credit card that has mile benefits attached, it would cost about four times more. We will not have any opportunity to get money back with this plan.

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

DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

14. REQUEST TO ACCEPT A GRANT FROM THE MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (MSHDA): Planning and Economic Development Department, re: Proposal by McKenna to update the Livonia Vision 21 Master Plan utilizing MSHDA Housing Readiness Incentive Grant.

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

Donovan Smith, Principal Planner, McKenna and Associates, spoke about the proposal.

Councilmember Donovic spoke about Livonia housing values.

Councilmember Budzinski asked what their strategies are for reaching people on the ground.

Mr. Smith said they do surveys and use Planning and Council to share methods that the City has had success with. They also are open to more innovative options.

Councilmember Donovic offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

15. REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION TO PURCHASE ONE ORION ZOOM CAMERA AND TRACTOR THROUGH THE SOURCEWELL CONTRACT: Department of Public Works, re: for use by the Sewer Department, from budgeted funds.

Ryan Ferrell, Assistant Director of Public Works, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Morgan offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

16. REQUEST TO PURCHASE TWO QUICKVIEW AIR HD CAMERAS WITH TELESCOPIC POLES AND TABLETS FROM SOLE SOURCE SUPPLIER: Department of Public Works, re: for use by the Sewer Department, from budgeted funds.

Ryan Ferrell, Assistant Director of Public Works, presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Toy offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

17. AWARD OF BID: Department of Public Works, re: for a Manual Transfer Switch and installation at the Newburgh Pump Station, from budgeted funds.

Ryan Ferrell, Assistant Director of Public Works presented the request to Council.

Councilmember Morgan offered an approving motion for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

18. REQUEST TO AUTHORIZE APPROPRIATION AND EXPENDITURE: Department of Public Works; Water & Sewer Division, re: for the emergency sewer repair on Farmington Road, from the Unexpended Fund Balance of the Water and Sewer Fund.

Don Rohraff, Director of Public Works, presented the request to Council.

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

DIRECTION APPROVED CONSENT

There was no Audience Communication at the end of the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 10:29 p.m.

For the Regular Meeting of September 23, 2024. LORI L. MILLER, CITY CLERK