

**CITY OF LIVONIA – CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF STUDY MEETING HELD AUGUST 9, 2021**

Meeting was called to order in the Auditorium of City Hall, 33000 Civic Center Drive, at 8:22 p.m. by President Kathleen McIntyre. Present: Laura Toy; Scott Bahr; Cathy White, Brandon McCullough; Rob Donovic; Jim Jolly and President Kathleen McIntyre. Absent: None.

Elected and appointed officials present: Mark Taormina, Director of Planning and Economic Development; Todd Zilincik, City Engineer; Paul Bernier, City Attorney; Susan Nash, City Clerk; LaShawn Thomas, Director of Governmental Affairs; Ted Davis, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation; Denise Maier, Director of Human Resources; Toni Laporte, Library Director; Brandie Isaacson, Director of Housing; and Sara Kasprowicz, Manager of Council Office.

Councilmember McCullough gave kudos to the library and its staff, especially Nathan Schloff, as there was a book discussion about “The Arc of Justice” for the City’s book program that is going on right now. All of the information is on the City’s website, and there’s a ton of programming and events coming up and actually “The Arc of Justice” author is going to be doing a read later in October. There was a decent crowd online via Zoom and talked about the life of Dr. Sweet and the tragic events that occurred on Garland Avenue in Detroit and it’s a very powerful book.

AUDIENCE COMMUNICATION None heard.

NEW BUSINESS

1) REQUEST TO WAIVE THE CITY’S NOISE ORDINANCE: Justin Ellsworth, Old Rosedale Gardens Homeowners Association, re: to show family friendly movies beginning at dusk until the end of the movie on Saturday, September 18, 2021 in Kleinert Park.

Justin Ellsworth presented this request to Council. He stated we’re going to show “The Sandlot” this year.

Councilmember White offered an approving resolution for the Consent Agenda.

DIRECTION:	APPROVING	CONSENT
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2) REQUEST TO WAIVE THE CITY’S NOISE ORDINANCE: Nick Cornell, General Manager, Supernatural Spirits and Brewing LLC, re: to host the Wildwood Sour Fest event on Saturday, August 28, 2021, from 3:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. with live music and DJs on property located at 36685 Plymouth Road.

DIRECTION: APPROVING REGULAR

Councilmember Jolly offered an approving resolution for the Regular Agenda.

DIRECTION: APPROVING REGULAR

Louis and Kim Palmer, 11866 Boston Post Street, presented this request to Council. They stated this is in memory of 911 and that their neighborhood has been through a lot in the last couple years and they would like to bring the old and the new neighbors together for this event. Neighbors abutting the area have been contacted.

Councilmember Toy asked if this is the first block party and the Palmers replied yes. She then offered an approving resolution for the Consent Agenda.

Councilmember Jolly commended the Palmers for putting forth the effort to bring the community together

Councilmember Donovic thanked the Palmers for acknowledging 911.

President McIntyre also thanked the Palmers for their leadership.

DIRECTION: APPROVING CONSENT

5) REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION AND EXPENDITURE: Department of Public Works, Re: for an additional \$25,550.00 to cover the unexpected increase in cost of previously approved vehicles, from budgeted funds. (CR 166-21 and CR 169-21)

Doug Moore, Assistant Superintendent of Public Works, presented this request to Council. He stated back on May 24th Council approved the purchase of three dump trucks with Council Resolution #166-21 and #169-21. Two of the dump trucks are for the Road Maintenance Section, one of the dump trucks is for the Water and Sewer Section. Since that time unfortunately the price of steel has gone through the roof and we are faced with an increase of price for the steel bed part of the option of the truck. We own the chassis and the cabs; we don't own the dump part yet. So, there's a cost increase for the three vehicles. The dump truck that is just a regular dump truck is

\$8,850.00 increase. The dump truck that has the live bottom which has a conveyor belt which helps move material to the back of the truck. The increase for that is \$10,510.00 and the increase for the water and sewer dump truck is almost \$6,200.00 and we are asking Council to approve the extra funding so we can get the beds put on the dump trucks.

Councilmember Jolly commended Moore for going above and beyond in his efforts for the City. He then stated I understand this is a serious matter and something that I'm going to offer an approving resolution for the Consent Agenda.

Vice President Bahr asked Moore how can we assure that this doesn't happen again and Moore replied that they will ask for a nonveto letter which will get us into the window that the prices are being held for. There always was a window for the price to be held, it was one of those wink/wink handshake kind of things back when times were normal and unfortunately now they aren't. so we know now unfortunately that we've got to expedite things through the process to make sure that we're doing the things that we need to do also.

DIRECTION:

APPROVING

CONSENT

6) REQUEST TO APPROVE HOURLY RATE INCREASE: Department of Civil Service, re: for the classification of Seasonal Laborers.

Denise Maier, Director of Human Resources, presented this request to Council. She stated she is requesting consideration of a pay increase for our seasonal laborers. Our seasonal laborers perform a critical role in the Department of Public Works during the warmer weather months. They supplement our regular work force and perform a variety of duties including grass cutting, laying sod, planting flowers, weeding beds, cleaning parks, patching roads, washing windows, painting, branch and brush chipping, athletic field maintenance and the list goes on. This classification has not had a pay increase since 2016 so we are seeking this evening to increase their pay and if Council approves, we would like to increase the pay rates immediately. The original request that was sent to Commission was actually for the rates to be increased January 2022 and the Commission thought that that was waiting too long so their resolution includes an amendment to the original request seeking that the hourly rate increase be effective the first pay period after City Council approval, so we would also be seeking a nonveto letter.

Councilmember Jolly asked what the pay increases would be and Maier replied the current pay rate for season one, because as they return to us, we've had some very loyal seasonal laborers that return year after year, the first season currently is \$11.00 an hour; the second season is \$11.50; and the third season is \$12.00. What we're seeking is \$12.00 for the first season, \$12.50 for the second season; \$13.00 for the third season. And then another increase January of 2023 to \$12.50, \$13.00, and \$13.50. And then January 2024, \$13.00 an hour, \$13.50, and \$14.00 an hour the third year.

Jolly stated I think those amounts make sense, particularly as we get further down the road here. Did you do benchmarking with other communities in terms of what they pay for similar and is it in line with those parameters and Maier replied yes, it is.

Jolly then offered an approving resolution for the Consent Agenda.

Vice President Bahr asked if the information included in their packets reflecting 20 to 25 down, has that been the case all summer and Maier replied yes, that not only are we having difficulty hiring them but we're also losing them, so it's both ways. Bahr asked if Maier has a sense of where they're going, a certain sector or something?

Doug Moore replied our loyal seasonals did not, because of the Corona virus, didn't come back last year and then we've lost them this year. This time of year we always lost them to go back to college anyway, so we were always running up against the wall this time of year. We have ten this year compared to probably thirty-five in 2019, and twenty go back to college. This year we had ten and two are leaving, so the percentage is even more. I don't know where they went, I just don't think they came back.

Bahr asked what types of jobs are these, some examples and Moore replied they'd be out with the mowing crew mowing parks, lining athletic fields, working at Bicentennial Park, doing the field prep, that kind of thing.

Bahr said you talked about wanting this immediately, even with a nonveto letter we're looking at this being the end of August, is it still even relevant at this point, is there a major hazard in waiting until January of 2022.

Maier replied major hazard, no. You're not hiring them right now and Moore replied no. We always had difficulties finding them in September/October anyway because the applications we looked at were old, people weren't applying.

Bahr said the reason I asked that is ultimately leading to this: We obviously just voted in our Regular Meeting tonight on this for Parks and Rec, we've got this on here, the next item is a similar type of thing, in your judgment are we going to be seeing a number of more of these and Maier replied yes. Bahr said with that in mind, the rationale all makes sense, but I think it would behoove us as a Council rather than piece mealing this, is to look at this all at once. I'd like to propose that we put in Committee of the Whole this topic to look at this cohesively and see if we can just understand what all we're going to be looking at. I understand the market realities, but rather than doing this piecemeal every meeting, I think it would behoove us to look at it all at once. So I'd offer to put it in Committee of the Whole, the subject of wage increase due to current market realities.

Maier stated we're basically done with the temporary type positions, as far as getting them through and getting them adjusted. The other classifications are union or unrepresented and those are all part of Collective Bargaining.

Bahr then asked to your knowledge you don't anticipate any more of these with temporary --- or I'm getting ahead of myself --- but we've got a substitute librarian one coming up; in your judgment is that the last of these that we're going to see in the near future.

Maier replied when I answered affirmatively to are you going to see me again, yes, that's because we do have another department but it's actually full-time positions that we will be bringing forward to you. But other than that, and also Transit will be coming forward but we're almost through the temporary positions.

Bahr said if that's the case, I'll withdraw my motion, thanks.

Councilmember McCullough stated he has probably more of a statement, being on the other side during my day job, we would always have to hire twenty seasonals and it was a game. Honestly, you would want to fill that up and anybody that could fill out the application and want to come to work and go through the background, they're going to get a job. And to listen that we have ten out of a potential thirty-five, and looking at these numbers, they're significantly low compared to the surrounding areas. I know at my former employer that there was an offering of incentives when the college kids went back to school for any of them that were local. I think it was 100 bucks extra on a paycheck if they stayed. So, just to put it in perspective having that knowledge base, I think these are, even Mr. Moore, I think that you might want to be able to pick up some people if there is someone out there and this might help, at least to pick up two or three people to help you with the winter. So, I think these are imperative, I think they're great moves, and I'm happy to support.

Councilmember Jolly said I had mentioned when we talked about the Rec Center employees and you were talking about giving them a temporary pay increase, exploring possible options for creative solutions here, right. This is primarily relying upon college students to fill these summer positions and I'm going back fifteen years, I remember seeing them, they're around the municipal campus and everywhere else, has there been an exploration at all possibly offering them if they start with us at the beginning of the summer and they make it all the way through, they return to college, we give them potentially sort of like a small scholarship incentive, that either we could pay for, or maybe we could partner with a community organization to pay for or something like that because I mean we hear about the lack of it's not necessarily connected in a way but these people are doing significant work for us as a City but they're also pursuing their different educational paths as well, kind of put them more hand in hand there to give them something to kind of return to and have an incentive to stay for the whole year, just a thought.

Maier replied it's a very good thought and I think we have time because this season is coming to an end for the seasonal laborers, we do have time to discuss that and to look at options that are similar to that so I think that's a really good idea.

Jolly said I know we're always cautious about money coming out of the City coffers, taxpayer funds and stuff like that, but as we saw earlier tonight there are a lot of generous people and organizations in the community who may have an interest in doing that as well because this is how we get our younger people, our college students, and other people involved early on in our community having some kind of connection with the City and maybe staying and adding more value in the future.

Maier replied exactly and to Doug's point of the loyal seasonal laborers that we've had, they didn't come back after Covid 19 but that doesn't mean that we couldn't get that repeat again going.

Councilmember Donovic asked how often do we have our seasonal employees that decide they want to continue working with the City of Livonia and maybe become the next Doug Moore, do we have those seasonal employees?

Moore replied we have a couple that have been with us ten years that have returned. We have a handful, well, it's more than a handful, it was always about ten, fifteen, that would start with us right at the beginning of May and work through until just at the end of leaf season. And we counted on them every year, every year they were back. And most of them were retirees and they got to the point where they just aged out of being able to do that.

Donovic stated that recently we had a Committee meeting with both Chiefs from the PD and FD about programs to attract youth to come into that profession and I just wondered there are young people that are going to school and maybe they want to work future careers in DPW and what not, I just didn't know if there were any programs or any sort of incentives where that discussion with these college students hey, you can have a really great career in DPW and municipal work; I was just wondering if there was any thought to any program or any discussion, any educational opportunities for those young people that hey, I know you're raking leaves and picking up trash right now but one day you can be sitting in our office presenting before City Council.

Councilmember Toy asked if they have ever thought about privatizing that part of the lawn mowing or whatever. I mean I understand that you want to give all these incentives, I understand the lack of employment, I also understand that there's people out there that do want to work. I've had two of them come in my store in the last week. So, it's weak and I get that and I get other cities are having problems, but have you ever thought of new venues to do rather than give, give, give more money, a lot of times that's not the total answer, it may be but I think as Councilman Bahr just said, we're kind of looking at this, we're looking at that, and it's almost like we need to take it and get our arms around it somehow and I know it's frustrating for you guys, too, I'm not trying to pass bad dispersions on it, I'm just saying I don't want to say privatization but I do because mowing lawns is something that a lot of folks do and I realize some of these landscaping places are busy and you can't get them and all that. But there's individuals and groups out there that do it just for extra money right now, you know, so have we looked at anything like that in the past or present.

Moore replied one-third of our parks are cut by contractor. The parks that do not have, most of them do not have recreational features, they're just open area, that we do that with. We're trying to keep a handle on the parks where people are visiting because we know we can take care of them better and revisit them more frequently.

Toy said and I know it's frustrating for you, don't get me wrong, I empathize and all that, I'm just trying to say can we move that to other venues so that you don't have to keep coming back here, is that sensible, I don't know, you run your program, not me, but I just wondered.

DIRECTION:

APPROVING

CONSENT

7) REQUEST TO APPROVE HOURLY RATE INCREASE: Department of Civil Service, re: for the classification of Substitute Librarian.

Denise Maier, Director of Human Resources, presented this request to Council. She stated I would like to open with the fact that our substitute librarian position has not had an increase for fourteen years and this is why our Library Director brought it to our attention. This position does require a master's degree in Library and Information Science and it's currently paying \$1.26 per hour less than the temporary clerk. So this is something we should have probably looked at previously but it was brought to our attention and the Commission approved it and we currently have a list of substitute librarians, I think there's like thirteen names, so we've got healthy list.

Councilmember White said when I looked at this I was quite frankly shocked with the pay rate being so low for people who have a master's degree in Library and Information Science, so I fully support this and I'll offer an approving on Consent if there's no objection.

Councilmember Jolly said I absolutely support this. So, my mother-in-law, later in life went and got her Master's of Library and Science so through her eyes I'm able to see that it's actually quite a grueling program. People don't think about this being I don't want to say not a profession but I mean we think about doctors, lawyers, and these kinds of things, this is quite a program that these people have to go through and they should be compensated accordingly.

Vice President Bahr stated just wanting to try and understand the market need, it's one thing to talk about education requirements, you said we haven't needed these for many reasons including the pandemic but we have a pool of substitute librarians that we've used in the past. Have we seen evidence that we're losing these people and Toni Laporte, Library Director, replied no, at least as far as I know. We have called three of our regulars back since we started opening up for business. We will be contacting more of them in September when we open on Saturdays and Sundays. And I'm hoping we're going to call them before that time but I'm hoping that we still have that many that are on the list and they haven't moved on or decided to retire so we're not sure yet.

Bahr then asked these substitute librarians, I assume from their title it's when the full-time librarians are on vacation or sick or whatever, it's not a regular thing and Laporte replied it's usually a four hour stint. Bahr then asked if we were having an issue prior to the pandemic with keeping these people on and Laporte replied no. Bahr said because I know, and I'm not trying to be a curmudgeon here, it's never fun being a guy asking these questions, but this one I struggle with a little bit more only just from a market need perspective. I understand it hasn't had a raise as you say in fourteen years, but from a market perspective it sounds like that hasn't been an issue. And then like with the master's degree when you say we pay them for the education, I guess the other question I would have an no disrespect to anybody when I say this but when we're talking about a substitute position the last one Councilman Jolly talked about thinking creatively about those, my question is do we need a master's degree for those? And it's not to take away from the degree but the question is does that potentially open up a greater pool of people? And I'm not going to mention names here but I know people that have filled in as substitute librarians without, on extended periods in other cities, without that level of education and has been able to perform the job fine. So that's the question I have, why do we need to require that as a qualification for a substitute? I'm not asking for the full-time.

LaPorte replied well, we know it's important that our librarians have library degrees, it's just something that we feel is necessary for the full-time but they're basically doing almost the same job, so why would we have someone with a lesser degree filling in for them?

Bahr said let's say in schools, for example, a substitute teacher in one sense is doing the same job as a full-time teacher but in another sense very much isn't. They're not doing the long term planning, they're not doing the strategic planning, all those kind of things, so I think there is a difference.

LaPorte replied right, there is a difference, but they're still doing reference work, people still come to them with questions that a lot of times other people don't know the answers to.

Bahr said what we're looking at here is a 25% wage increase for something that I haven't heard evidence that we have a market need for. That's where I struggle with this. I would ask that this be on the Regular, please.

Councilmember Donovic asked how many substitute librarians do we have currently and LaPorte replied about thirteen. Donovic then asked how many full-time librarians do we have and LaPorte replied maybe fifteen. Donovic asked those are spread out between Sandburg and Civic and the ones that substitute librarians, those will fill in wherever they're needed and LaPorte replied yes.

Councilmember McCullough said just a general statement, looking over the numbers in the packet, the numbers right now obviously the current amount are historically low,

we're talking fourteen, fifteen years is what you were saying before we had any increases? And I know some of the staff that might have been sticking along, I give them a huge amount of credit for sticking around and pledging their loyalty and giving us the shirt off their backs for the last however many years. I think that this increase makes us competitive, it also provides us a way to let our employees know that we're going to take care of them, especially the thirteen that are there, and then as these librarians move on, it's also going to keep the competitiveness so we're not going to be sitting there having an issue for retention. So this is something that I think is much needed, overdue and something I'll be supporting.

DIRECTION:

APPROVING

REGULAR

8) REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO ENTER INTO AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN SMART AND THE CITY OF LIVONIA: Livonia Housing Commission, re: for the Municipal Credit Contract for the period July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, with all Credits to be used for the Livonia Community Transit Program.

Brandie Isaacson, Director of Housing, presented this request to Council. She stated that we are able to receive municipal credits of approximately \$95,000.00. This is a grant that goes to support our Community Transit Department which operates twenty-two busses and provides transportation to Livonia seniors to go to shopping, medical appointments, the VA in Ann Arbor, both by appointment and nonappointment.

Councilmember Toy stated this program is just super worthwhile for seniors and others that need it and I will ask that we renew this contract and give it our blessings on Consent.

Councilmember Donovic said recently he was at the VFW and one of the veterans that had walked in there said that him and a friend of his had used the transportation system to actually get to the hospital, they're dropped off somewhere and there's like a carpool or bus pool or some other area and another bus picks them up from there and takes them out. So I heard some good things about it and I know sometimes our veterans have a difficult time getting out to either Ann Arbor. So my question was does this bus route, do they also have an option to go to Detroit or is it only Ann Arbor and Isaacson replied only Ann Arbor and Donovic asked why that is and Isaacson replied I think that's how it was originally set up. I don't know that we've had a demand to go to the Detroit VA.

Councilmember Jolly thanked Isaacson for being there and bringing this before us, it's obviously a good program, it's been working. I want to thank Mr. Diehl for all the work that he does for our community. We oftentimes have these people who serve on commissions and they attend some meetings here and there and that's very valuable. Mr. Diehl was a frequent volunteer at the vaccination clinic at the Senior Center almost throughout, he was very noticeable in assisting people in the waiting room before they could leave. I know myself and some other people on Council had an opportunity to volunteer with them and he was just a great spirit and very encouraging to everybody so

I just want to take a moment to thank him for being here tonight and also for everything that he does for our community.

Vice President Bahr stated I have no issues with it, Brandie, but I asked this question shortly after I came on Council and I need to ask it again because I need a refresher. This is just for my education; I don't have any issues with approving this. Can you help me understand and anybody that might be interested that's watching, why do we get funding for this through SMART when we're not paying into SMART, what exactly is going on here?

Isaacson replied it's to supplement our operating expenses so we do receive money through the millage but that only supports about \$800,000.00 and our operating expenses are over \$1,000,000.00. So we do receive from special grants through SMART to help support our operations.

Bahr asked if those extra \$300,000.00, is SMART providing some of those services for us and Isaacson replied no, we provide all the services, they do assist us with vehicles, to purchase vehicles, last year we received a grant to purchase a mobility vehicle to assist those that are physically disabled.

Bahr asked so we're getting grants through SMART; is that Federal funding that's just coming through SMART and Isaacson replied yes, we operate our entire transit program, but we do receive some additional funding that helps support it.

DIRECTION:	APPROVING	CONSENT
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9) AUDIT REPORT: Livonia Housing Commission, re: for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2020, excluding Silver Village, Newburgh Village, the Community Development Block Grant Program, and single-family City-Owned properties.

Brandie Isaacson, Director of Housing, presented this request to Council. She stated many of you guys know all of our programs that we operate through Silver Village, Community Development, our foods program, transportation, but the Housing Commission also operates a public housing program, a Section 8 program, a Capital Funds Program, and we did receive some CARES Act money this year. So, those programs are actually audited under the Housing Commission Independent Audit and not under Plante & Moran. So once a year we go through an audit, this year it was in June, to evaluate our revenues and expenditures and we have no findings so I am just going to just present this to you to receive and file.

President McIntyre asked if we do the audit ourselves and Isaacson replied we actually hire an independent company to come in and audit.

DIRECTION:	RECEIVE & FILE
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AUDIENCE COMMUNICATON None heard

As there were no further questions or comments, President McIntyre adjourned the Study Session at 9:09 p.m. on Monday, August 9, 2021

For the 1,927th Regular Meeting of August 23, 2021

DATED: August 17, 2021

SUSAN M. NASH, CITY CLERK