

**Observer:** Betty Hayford

**Aldermen present:** All

**Media present:** Three – Evanston Now, Roundtable, NU Daily

**Meeting began:** 8:45pm

**Meeting ended:** around 1:00am; I left at 11:45pm

**Announcements.** The Mayor expressed appreciation for Veterans on Veterans' Day and announced National Hunger and Homelessness Week. The City Manager expressed appreciation on the retirement of Bob Dorneker, Assistant Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, and recognized the contributions of Cindy Plante, Economic Development Coordinator, who is moving to a new job.

**Public comment.** 33 comments. Most on the budget. 11 expressed support for the Youth and Young Adult program and for Kevin Brown. Support expressed for Health Department, social services, sustainability, arts. 2 thanked council for supporting the theater on Howard Street. 3 supported Harley Clarke, 1 concerned about higher parking fees, 2 concerned about city debt, and 1 thanked council and staff for hard work on the budget.

**Special order of business (SP1) Revised 2019 Budget.** The City Manager introduced a revised FY2019 budget. He stated there are 805 employees in the city who work hard. They are being asked to support the effort for a balanced budget, to give up any salary increase and pay more for health insurance. The salary freeze for unionized workers will have to be negotiated in the current contract talks. The new budget includes \$700,000 in new revenue from the increase in property transfer tax approved in the referendum. This will start in March. The new budget includes an increase in property tax rate of 2%, similar to last year. It also adds two new parking enforcement officers to bring in additional parking revenue.

The increase in property tax and salary freeze will allow other proposed cuts to be reduced or eliminated. Vital Records operations will be maintained in the Health Department. Some cuts to the Health Department are eliminated. Proposed cuts in the Mental Health Board are reduced. Some police and fire positions will be held open, but Fire Station #4 will not be closed. A study will be made of other options for reducing fire costs. Robert Crown debt payments will not be reduced and the transfer to reserves will not be cut.

The aldermen engaged in thoughtful discussion about proposed cuts. Wynne said she would prefer no cuts to mental health board. She inquired about various parking options: additional enforcement officer, versus increased fees, meter rates compared to garage rates.

The City Clerk explained the proposal he made for the Clerk's office to take over Vital Records. He said his office would provide records five days a week, compared to the City Manager proposal that the health department provide records three days a week. He said his plan could bring \$100,000 in revenue. The City Manager and Health and Human Services Director Evonda

Thomas-Smith actively defended their proposal. The City Clerk aggressively defended his proposal. Eventually, Alderman Fiske moved to keep the Vital Records function in the Health Department. The motion passed, 8-1, with Fleming voting no.

Other options for revenue were proposed, including taxing private buses or some non-profit theaters. Fiske suggested a dog beach could bring in revenue of \$60,000-\$90,000 if a site could be found.

The City Clerk asked that \$25,000 be added to his office budget. The budget had been reduced slightly, mainly because of city-wide reduction of subsidy for medical insurance. This year his office expenses are expected to be over budget by almost \$20,000, mostly due to costs of seasonal employees. The Mayor said aldermen should consider this request and make a motion if they agreed. No motion was made.

Aldermen were asked to consider proposals for reducing or adding expenses. One suggestion was to add an administrative assistant to help administer arts funding. Others asked for more information about the qualifications and duties of the management analyst in the health department.

The City Manager said he will return with a revised budget for the next meeting. He is hopeful that a budget can be approved in the time available.

**Consent agenda.** At 11:45am, Council turned to the consent agenda. I left the meeting. Council continued for about another hour. The consent agenda included the introduction of several fees and taxes included in the budget, such as parking fees and tax on ride shares.