

**Council members present:** All. Suffredin and Reid on Zoom

**Meeting started:** 6:35

**Meeting ended:** 10:55

**Public Hearing. Truth in Taxation Hearing for 2022 Tax Levy. Citizen comment.** Two citizen comments. One said more discussion and citizen input was needed on the budget. The other criticized the information provided about Northwestern contribution to Robert Crown Center and use of rink time.

Council members responded. Kelly asked for more information about Northwestern "contribution." She asked where the money is. Lawrence Hemingway said the agreement with Northwestern is complex, reflects ice time, including time that Northwestern opens up to the community. Reid said Vasilko should take more time, and Vasilko asked why budget included so much more stuff. Reid said he feared that Council would have to raise property taxes after the AFPA funds are used. Gandarski agreed that deficits were projected for future years. An additional public comment said that unnecessary public spending should be cut.

The Truth in Taxation hearing adjourned at 7:00.

**Announcements.** The Mayor said he had no announcements, but he praised the police and fire unions for reaching agreement with the City on vaccination policy.

The City Manager introduced the chair of the Arts Council, Toby Sachs, who announced a new grant program to build community resiliency by supporting collaborative programs between arts groups and social service organizations.

**Public comment.** 13 comments. 2 opposed parking fee increases; 3 opposed the project at 1900 Sherman; 2 expressed concern about budget spending; 2 supported affordable housing for low and middle income on the South Boulevard property. Other support for the animal shelter, for Independence Park, and more social services, and one opposed the TIF.

**Special orders of business. (SP1) 2022 Budget Ordinance, for \$360,433,520, for Introduction.** Kate Lewis-Larkin presented slides showing the main elements of the budget, including the General Funds and several special funds (Water, Solid Waste, Equipment Replacement, etc). The increases in the General Fund are mostly covered by ARPA funds. Increased expenses include the loss of beach token revenue and partial cost of crossing guards. The budget includes 11 new positions, fewer than the 20 initially requested. Gandarski said staff might return to Council in mid-year to request additional positions which are still needed. Deficits are projected for 2023, 2024, and 2025. They will require new revenue or reducing services.

Kelly asked several questions about staff needs. Fleming said there is much to discuss and asked when decisions had to be made. Biss said the budget needed to be approved at the end of November. Fleming asked about the police assigned to ETHS and the crossing guards. Lewis-Larkin said that funding the crossing guards until June is in the budget. Reid said that perhaps no new positions should be in the budget and decisions on new positions should wait for the new City Manager.

Revelle said that the new positions are needed to enforce current regulations. She noted that repairs to Independence Park (on Central) are scheduled for 2023, but the damage has increased. She requested,

and moved, to add \$90,000 in consulting fees to design repairs to Independence Park so the project would be ready to begin in 2023. Wynne seconded and said the cost could be off-set elsewhere. Fleming opposed the change in park priorities and said parks in her ward needed work as well. Hemingway said the damaged equipment in Independence Park was no longer safe. The vote to add \$90,000 to the budget to plan renovation in Independence Park passed 8-1, Fleming voting no.

Kelly suggested that all the proposed positions be held without any action. Wynne said staff had provided memos explaining the need for new positions. She opposed cutting or deferring them. As long as we plan to provide services we need these new positions. Waiting for a new city manager is not responsible. Kelly wants the new city manager to decide what positions are needed. She moved that the proposed positions be held vacant until the new city manager is in place. Biss said the motion was unclear and asked the City Counsel to determine. Counsel Cummings said Council did not have authority to determine timing of hiring. Wynne reiterated that hiring requires some time and the authorization should be made now. Kelly made a motion to defer hiring, but the Mayor said it was not clear. Kelly said she had great concern. The Mayor asked if she had a motion. Kelly moved to remove the 11 new positions and the 29 old positions from the budget. Initially there was no second, then Reid seconded. The motion failed, 1-8, only Kelly voting in favor.

Fleming asked to remove the two police at the High School from the budget. Cummings said this is not possible because the City has a contract to provide the two positions until June 2024. Burns said that the new Finance and Budget committee can consider questions like this, but not for the current budget proposal. He supports the new positions in the budget.

Wynne called the question on the budget ordinance. It passed, for introduction, 5-4. Suffredin, Reid, Fleming and Kelly voted no.

**SP2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. All related to the budget, included City Tax Levy, General Assistance Tax Levy, Library Tax Levy, Taxes for Special Service Area #6 (Dempster-Main), #7 (East Central), #8 (West Central), #9 (Downtown), and Debt Service Property Tax Abatements for Introduction.** The Mayor suggested they be voted on together since they are in support of the budget ordinance. They were moved and seconded and passed 5-4. Kelly, Suffredin, Reid and Fleming voted no.

**SP10. Allocation of ARPA Funds for Grant Management, Compliance and Reporting, \$900,000.** Fleming said we need compliance but she wasn't sure this is the best approach. Chicago is hiring a contractor and that may be a better approach. Johanna Nyden explained that this is a long term investment in working with federal funding. There may be new funding when ARPA funds are all used. The motion passed 7-2, Fleming and Kelly voted no.

**Consent agenda.** (9:30) Council members asked to remove A1, A3, A8, A22, A24, P2 and ED1 from the consent agenda. Reid said that policy changes are involved and they haven't been through committee. Braithwaite asserted that there were no policy changes. The Mayor suggested a motion – to suspend rule 9.7 for this session so Council could consider all items. Reid moved and it was seconded. The motion to suspend the rule passed 8-0-1, Braithwaite abstained.

The consent agenda passed 9-0.

A1. Approval of BMO Harris Amazon Credit Card activity. It was moved and seconded and passed 8-0-1, Suffredin abstained.

A3. Approval of Parking Garage Rate Amendments. Eliminating free parking in the garages for the first hour and on Sunday. Parking garage rates will still be cheaper than street parking. Several council members opposed ending free parking on Sunday. Nieuwsma moved to continue free parking on Sunday. The amendment passed 9-0. Biss asked whether there is data to guide us on how parking fees impact shopping and downtown businesses and restaurants. Zalmezak answered at some length, saying it is considered not good public policy to offer free parking, because there is always a cost. But parking needs to be price sensitive. Low cost parking is not a deterrent to shoppers, but high cost parking might be. It was moved to amend the ordinance to charge \$1 for the first hour of parking, \$2 for subsequent hours. The amendment passed 8-0. Suffredin did not vote.

The motion as amended twice, to allow free parking on Sunday and \$1 for first hour passed 8-0. During the discussion, Michael Rivera, Director of Parking, said revenue was important not just for maintenance, but for enhancements such as charging stations. Several council members mentioned the appeal of Wilmette because of free parking. Others noted that Evanston isn't Wilmette and the comparison isn't useful.

A8. Approval of Contract with Holabird and Root for Architectural and Engineering Services for the Animal Shelter for \$626,300. The motion passed 7-1, Fleming voted no. Suffredin seems to have left the meeting.

A22. Ordinance Amending the City Code to increase the fines for safety-related parking restrictions and traffic obstruction fines. The motion failed 3-5. Kelly, Burns and Reid voted yes.

A24. Authorizing the City Manager to Sell City Owned Property at 2022-2026 Central (North Branch Library). The motion passed 7-1, Kelly voted no.

P2. Extending the time to Obtain a Building Permit for the Planned Development at 1900 Sherman Street for 12 months. Kelly opposed the extension because the proposed building does not have enough affordable housing. She read letters from residents opposing the building. The motion passed 7-1, Kelly voted no.

ED1. Main Street and Howard Street Retail and Food Establishment Construction/Pandemic Grant Program. This program would provide assistance to establishments impacted by the combination of road construction and pandemic restrictions. Fleming expressed concern that this might set a precedent and other districts might want grants if construction projects impacted business. Braithwaite said that the Economic Development Committee had discussed the program extensively and concluded it was a unique circumstance unlikely to be repeated. The City would replace half the losses incurred up to a maximum of \$25,000. The total grant was capped. The motion passed 8-0.

**Call of the wards.** Several meetings were announced.

The meeting adjourned at 10:55.