

Observer: Betty Hayford

Council members present: All. In person!

Meeting started: 7:25

Meeting ended: 9:51

Announcements. The Mayor had no announcements. The City Manager asked Paul Zalmezak, Community Development Manager, to make a presentation. Zalmezak said that the community was expressing concern about the number of business closings and vacancies. He said there was no reason to panic and the vacancy rate was declining. It is necessary to work together to attract and support businesses, and only around 40% of workers have returned to their offices. The economy is in a restructuring process, and the city is conducting a survey of the downtown situation. There is extensive private investment going on, including Northlight Theater and the Orrington Hotel. There are new businesses coming into Church Street Plaza.

City Manager Stowe gave an update on the report from employees complaining about racism and bias. He has been working with Council Member Harris to meet with staff and have listening sessions. The major complaints involve pay disparity, HR reviews, and performance reviews. The new position of Equity and Organizational Performance Manager has been posted and an employee satisfaction survey has been developed. Plans to implement improvements are being speeded up.

Public comment. 8 comments. 3 supported payments for small land lords with ARPA funds. 2 opposed the NU plan for a new stadium, challenging the NU predictions of positive impact and urging a more modest upgrade. 1 supported an economic development plan for the minority community; 1 opposed the ban on cashless businesses; 1 expressed concern about the Council goal setting process and asked about implementation and evaluation of goals.

Special orders of business. (SP1) Amending Portions of “General Offenses” of the City Code. Reid reported that he has been working with the Police Department and the revision has been improved. Consumption of alcohol and cannabis in public will still be forbidden, but changes are sought in the language related to possession in public. Officer Sophier asked to keep the prohibition on open containers which had help prevent incidents. Reid continued to press the changes and Suffredin called the question. The motion to call the question failed, 4-5. Revelle, Reid, Geracaris, Wynne and Nieuwsma voted no.

Nieuwsma said he shared the concerns about public consumption and open carry. These actions can impact the quality of life in public spaces. The police need these tools. Nieuwsma moved to amend to prohibit open containers. Revelle seconded. Biss asked Sophier whether this amendment was accepted to the Police and he answered it was. The amendment passed 7-2, Reid and Kelly voted no. The vote on the motion as amended, for Introduction, passed 8-1. Suffredin voted no.

(SP2) ARPA Update. Sarah Flax gave a report on the unallocated ARPA balance. Since the request for ARPA funds for the Reparations Committee had been withdrawn, there are some funds available, about \$5.7 million. The most likely areas were to correct the negative economic impact of Covid and to replace city revenue. Some proposals were for a healthy food operation that would create jobs, funding for small landlords, and a work force development plan for the Mather. There is also a proposal for the city to purchase barriers to protect public events. Staff is also looking at funds for affordable housing, but that may be available through low income housing tax credits. There are also plans for business district

improvements. Staff is looking to Council for guidance. Reid offered some confusing comments and expressed support for affordable housing. Geracaris suggested funds for public health. Burns said he is working with the Health Department to support improvements in health care and track the results.

Consent agenda. The Mayor asked for items to be removed from the consent agenda. A7, A8, and A9 had been held in committee. A1, A13, A14 and H1 were removed. The consent agenda passed 9-0.

Item A1, Approval of City Payroll and Bills. The motion passed 8-0. Nieuwsma abstained.

Item A13 and A14, Authorizing the City Manager to Execute the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Evanston Police Sergeants Association and the Agreement with the Illinois Fraternal Order of Police were moved together. The motion passed 9-0.

H1, Amending the City Code to Prohibit Cashless Business Establishments. Suffredin asked for information about the reason for the amendment: how many business do not accept cash, how many people are impacted? He spoke at some length and said that voting without more information would be irresponsible. Zalmezak said they have not done a survey and do not have information. Sue Loelbach reported that most Connections for the Homeless clients were not banked. Suffredin repeated that Council should not pass the measure without more information. Reid explained that we know there are cashless businesses in Evanston and numbers are expanding. Harris said we do not have data but we know many people do not have bank accounts or credit cards. Nieuwsma said that small business owners are concerned about security and reluctant to handle cash. Revelle shared Nieuwsma's concern and said more discussion with business owners is needed. Wynne said she has spoken to business owners who are opposed, and she is opposed. Reid said New Jersey and other cities had adopted this ban. Harris said allowing cashless businesses creates problems of equity.

Nieuwsma moved to return this measure to the Economic Development Committee for more discussion and information. Suffredin amended to send it to the Equity and Empowerment Committee for review as well. The vote to refer passed 8-1, Reid opposed.

Call of the wards. Meetings were announced.

The meeting adjourned to Executive Session at 9:50.

All CMs were present and all votes were roll call votes. There is nothing for the League to follow here.