

**Observer:** Kristine Lofquist

**Council Members present:** Kelly, Nieuwsma, Braithwaite, Suffredin, Wynne, Burns, Reid, and Geracaris (Suffredin, Wynne and Braithwaite arrived late, but there was a quorum when the meeting started)

**Meeting started:** 6:40 pm

**Meeting ended:** 10:58 pm

Mayor Biss called the meeting to order at 6:40 pm. The City Clerk took the roll call and noted there was a quorum.

**Announcements**

Evanston Own It presented checks to the City for \$8,000 for the Summer Youth Program and \$1,000 to the Officer and a Gentleman Program.

Mayor Biss read a proclamation on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the League of Women Voters of Evanston on March 28, 2022.

City Manager Report – there was no report

City Clerk Report – Clerk Mendoza noted there were several public comments in favor of the mental health living room

**Resolution 17-R-22 – Approval of an Honorary Street Name Sign Designation**

A Motion was made and seconded to approve a resolution designating the portion of McDaniel Ave. between Nathaniel St. and Greenleaf St. with the Honorary Street Name Sign, William ‘Bill’ Logan Jr. Way. The Motion passed unanimously. Chief Logan, various council members and the Logan family thanked the City for the honor.

**Public comment.** There were three comments opposing Connections for the Homeless’ purchase of the Margarita Inn and three comments in support of the mental health living room. There was a comment concerning the City’s past practice on approving payments to temporary employees and that it had not been applied fairly, one question on an \$85,000 legal bill and one comment expressing concern regarding the City getting back on schedule to achieve carbon neutrality on a timely basis.

**Executive Session** – A Motion was made and seconded for the Council to go into executive session. The Motion passed 7-0 and the Council went into executive session from 7:30 pm to 9:50 pm.

**Special Orders of Business:**

SP 1 – A Motion was made and seconded authorizing the Interim City Manager to execute an Intergovernmental Agreement between the City of Evanston, the Board of Education of Evanston Township High School District No. 202 and the Board of Education of Evanston/Skokie School District No. 65. The Motion passed 8-0.

SP2-A Motion was made and seconded to approve the use of ARPA Funds to establish a mental health living room in Evanston. Councilmember Braithwaite raised questions regarding prioritizing Evanston residents and managing behavior outside the facility. The Turning Point representative noted that the Skokie living room has not needed outside support. Mayor Biss reminded the council that it is not going to be a residential facility and the Turning Point representative noted the hours are from Noon to 8 p.m. She also noted that the plan for the facility will be designed with community input and welcomed councilmembers to visit the Skokie facility. Councilmember Reid invited the Turning Point representative to attend the next ward meeting. In response to a

question from Councilmember Burns regarding on who currently owns the land where the facility located, it was noted that it is owned by Amita Health. In response to a question regarding rental cost for the property, the Interim City Manager stated that the City is discussing this with Amita Health, but it will be a negligible amount (\$1 or so). Councilmember Burns inquired regarding how the space would be converted, and the Turning Point representative noted it will feel like a living room but will also include other spaces for counseling and mental health services.

In response to a question from Councilmember Nieuwsma regarding the long-term funding for the facility, the Turning Point representative noted she hopes the living room will provide value to the community and that community members such as hospitals will contribute when they discover how it saves money that would have been needed for emergency room visits, etc. She also stated that living room contracts will be up for renewal at the state level and that Evanston will request allocations for their living room. She also noted there is an opportunity to ask for money at the Cook County level. The Motion passed 8-0.

**Consent Agenda.** A Motion was made and seconded to pass the Consent Agenda, after removing items A-11, A-18, A-21 and P-2. The Motion passed 8-0.

A-11 – A Motion was made and seconded to authorize the Interim City Manager to execute an agreement with Total Parking Solutions Inc. for the purchase of 28 parking Pay Stations and the associated management software for a total cost of \$232,400. Councilmember Reid asked Mike Rivera about the annual cost of the annual loss for the free beach parking for Evanston residents who pay wheel tax, and it was noted there was a loss of about \$700,000 annually. The Motion passed 8-0.

A18 – A Motion was made and seconded to approve the construction of a local improvement known as Evanston Special Assessment No. 1527 for the alley North of Grant Street and East of Hastings Avenue. The Motion passed 7-0, with Councilmember Suffredin abstaining.

A21 – A Motion was made and seconded to authorize the Interim City Manager to execute a contract with Drexwood Partners LLC to act as the City’s lobbyist in the not-to-exceed amount of \$70,000. The contract term, corresponding to the convening and adjourning of the Illinois legislative session, is for fourteen months (March 1, 2022 - May 31, 2023), with the option of a one-year extension. Councilmember Reid noted his questions from the last meeting had been answered but that he would still like to see a scope of work or a contract with this firm and that his concern is making sure the lobbyist is lobbying for things that are important for the Evanston community. He asked how the Council will be informed on what the lobbyist is doing, and the Interim City Manager noted she will work with Nick Cummings to ensure there are periodic reports to Council.

Councilmember Braithwaite stated his concerns, wishing there was more time to understand the position and how it will benefit the taxpayer base. In response to a question on how the lobbyist is compensated, Mayor Biss noted that it will be on a monthly retainer basis. Councilmember Burns noted he has several issues he would like addressed and asked it would be alright for councilmembers to work directly with the Interim City Manager to get this done, to which the answer was “yes”. Councilmember Nieuwsma stated that the value of the fees will be made up in state funding. He also asked if the contract includes intergovernmental funding to which Mayor Biss replied in the affirmative. In response to a question from Councilmember Reid regarding whether the lobbyist could work on changing municipal issues, Councilmember Suffredin noted that the lobbying will mostly be for grants and funding. Mayor Biss indicated that there have been occasions when the prior City lobbyist worked on targeted legislation. He gave two examples from his time in the State legislature – one being the township dissolution and the other approval for Few Spirits. He also noted that most of the lobbying will be for specific,

transparent issues. Following further discussion, the Motion passed on a roll call vote of 5-3, with three councilmembers (Reid, Kelly and Braithwaite) voting “no”.

P-2 - A Motion was made and seconded approving a Major Variation for the Property Located at 1706-10 Sherman Avenue to allow 18 parking stalls (where two are on-site and 16 are off-site) where 28 are required in the D2 Downtown Retail Core District. Councilmember Kelly made a Motion to table the ordinance to the April 25, 2022 council meeting and Councilmember Braithwaite seconded the Motion. She noted that there were still several issues regarding the loading zone and parking variance and that City staff needs that time to effectively review the issue. The Motion to table passed 8-0.

**Call of the wards.**

Councilmember Braithwaite thanked Evanston Own It for the donation to the summer youth program and he congratulated Bill Logan and family.

Councilmember Wynne invited the ward to her office hours, the first Thursday in April.

Councilmember Nieuwsma noted he has to reschedule the next ward meeting and that his office hours are 10am-12pm at Cupitol on Saturday.

Councilmember Burns reported his next ward meeting will be virtually on March 31 at 7 pm to discuss the Oakton Academy for Black Men and the new skate park

Councilmember Suffredin had not report

Councilmember Reid notes his next ward meeting will be virtually on March 31 at 6pm. He asked if it would be appropriate for the City to set up a small refugee resettlement fund to be used for refugees to Evanston from nations such as Ukraine. A Motion was made and seconded to place a special order of business on the agenda to allocate \$75,000 for refugee resettlement. The Motion failed on a roll call vote of 5-3, with Burn, Geracaris and Reid voting in favor and the others against.

Councilmember Geracaris had no report

Councilmember Kelly had no report

A Motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The Motion passed 8-0. The meeting was adjourned at 10:58 p.m.