

**Observer:** Betty Hayford

**Aldermen present:** All

**Meeting started:** 7:05 pm

**Meeting ended:** 10:25 pm

Alderman Wilson moved to suspend the rules and permit holding the meeting over Zoom. The motion was seconded and passed 9-0.

**Public Hearing for 2021 Proposed Budget.** Mayor Hagerty explained that State Ordinance requires the City to hold a public hearing on the proposed budget. Four members of the public spoke. Their comments had a similar approach: there was insufficient publicity for the public hearing; spending should be cut, especially the police budget; opposition to the proposed property tax levy increase; question about savings from the closing of the Civic Center, reduction in summer programs and other Covid-related events. The public budget hearing was adjourned at 7:30.

**Announcements.** Mayor Hagerty announced that Covid-related data are growing worse, with increased cases. New restrictions on Region 10 (Cook County including Evanston) will begin this week, barring indoor service in restaurants and bars and limiting indoor activities to 25.

The City Clerk reported on early voting and encouraged candidates for the spring elections to consult the video describing guidelines for filing candidacies and running for office.

**Public comment.** 7 comments on a number of issues. 2 supported the decision not to approve the proposed development at 1621-1631 Chicago Avenue; 2 asked that Council work more closely with citizens especially on the budget; 2 asked that reparations provide checks directly to eligible citizens; 1 urged the city to support distressed restaurant owners.

**Special order of business (SP1) Proposed 2021 Budget discussion.** City Manager Storlie reported that staff have gone to ward meetings to answer questions about the budget. She explained the importance of the Fund Balance, a reserve fund, that is being used this fall to cover some expenses and needs to be rebuilt. The strength of the Fund Balance is considered by the credit rating agencies and the bond community. In recent years Council adopted a policy that the Fund Balance should be able to cover 2 months expenses, and it is not at that level. Health and Human Services Director Ike Ogbo explained the impact of the virus on operations.

Alderman Fleming proposed to reduce the contribution to the Fund Balance and the pension funds. Storlie reiterated the need to rebuild the Fund Balance and maintain the City's credit rating. Braithwaite and other aldermen asked city staff to provide more information about the impact of not rebuilding the Fund Balance and whether a more gradual rebuilding could be proposed. Braithwaite also asked if the Capital Improvement budget could be reduced, although it has already been reduced from about \$10 million to \$6 million. Wynne and Rainey stressed the importance of having a strong Fund Balance since a reduction in the City credit rating would cost money for years.

**Consent agenda.** The Mayor asked aldermen to remove any items from the consent agenda that they wished to discuss. P1, R4, R7 were removed. Wynne reported that Planning and Development had voted not to advance P3 allowing a special use for a development at 1621-1631 Chicago Avenue.

Alderman Rue Simmons moved the consent agenda, including Minutes, payroll, bills, Administration and Public Works, Planning and Development, Rules and Appointments. The motion was seconded and passed 9-0.

From **Planning and Development** Wynne moved (P1) Approving a Plat of Subdivision for 1605-1631 Chicago Avenue. Alderman Wilson moved to table so this item could be considered at the next meeting along with P2, which had been approved for Introduction. The motion to table was seconded and passed 9-0.

Alderman Rue Simmons presented (R4) Codifying Portions of the City Code describing the Reparations Subcommittee, for Introduction. The amendments specify a committee of 3 aldermen, those representing the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> Wards, and 4 citizens appointed by the Mayor. Rue Simmons asserted that the alderman of predominantly Black wards should form the committee and recommendations for nominations of citizens would be made by the Reparations Subcommittee. The motion passed 9-0.

(R7) Setting compensation for Aldermen generated long discussion. It offered three options for setting compensation for aldermen elected in 2021, one similar to the current system and others changing the arrangements for medical insurance. For Introduction. Wilson suggested narrowing the list and proposed supporting either Option 1 or Option 3, eliminating Option 2 which would provide compensation of \$37,800 with Council providing their own insurance. After further discussion, Wilson moved Option 3, annual compensation of \$15,900 (the current level) with a health insurance allowance covering the full cost of insurance. The motion was seconded, but failed to pass, with Fleming, Fiske, Wynne, Suffredin and Revelle voting no (failed 4-5). Then Wynne moved Option 1, continuing the current compensation. The motion was seconded and passed 5-4, Rainey, Braithwaite, Wilson, Rue Simmons voting no. For Introduction.

**Call of the wards.** The main comment during Call of the Wards was Alderman Rainey who criticized the decision on compensation and said it was very wrong and very unfair, and expressed strong disappointment about the decision.

The meeting adjourned at 10:25 pm.