

**Aldermen present.** All attending. Reid on Zoom

**Meeting started.** 6:35pm

**Meeting ended.** 11:25pm

**Announcements.** None

**Public comment.** 16 comments. 5 asked for more funds for Mental Health services. 4 expressed budget concerns, including too much spending, need for more public comment, and need for more input from Finance and Budget Committee. 1 supported funds for AUX and one opposed. Concerns about spending on Robert Crown, need to hire more police officers, opposition to TIF, and support for small landlords.

**SP1. 2022 Proposed Budget Discussion. (a) Budget.** Councilmember Kelly asked numerous questions about the proposed budget. She opposed building a maintenance fund for the Robert Crown Center. CM Gandarski explained that maintenance fund is for preventive maintenance, not for staff, although staff is also needed. It is necessary to plan for future maintenance. Revelle, Wynne and Nieuwsma concurred that planning for future major maintenance is responsible way to avoid disrepair. This is not the same as operating funds for upkeep. Nieuwsma said it could be useful to look for savings in the budget. (He didn't mention any.) He looked for commitment to Climate Fund, and Revelle also supported designating funds for Climate Action. Reid suggested that the vacant property registration fee be increased and Johanna Nyden said this could be developed. Reid asked about annual cost of maintaining parking garages and suggested a head tax for large businesses that would exempt Evanston residents. He also asked for information on progressive parking fines and on the number of affordable units.

**(b) Crossing Guards.** There was a long discussion about funding for crossing guards, some of which was lost in transmission break. Council members generally expressed unwillingness for the City to fund crossing guards for District 65. The City contracts with Andy Frain to provide crossing guards. Previously, City Parking Enforcement Officers provided crossing guard services, at a cost of \$150 an hour in lost fines. Currently the Montessori School and ETHS repay the city for crossing guards and District 65 does not. Michael Rivera, Parking Manager, explained that many neighboring towns no longer provide crossing guards for their schools. Staff has developed a three-year plan for District 65 to assume cost of guards. Rivera said when City provides guards there may be some liability.

After more discussion, Mayor Biss summed up the discussion by saying there was general agreement to support the crossing guards through June, the end of District 65 fiscal year, and then develop a plan to phase out current payment for District 65 guards. There should be no support for private schools.

**C Free beaches.** Staff asked for guidance about making beach access free for all residents. There was general support for making beach access free, although there were different opinions about whether entry should require tokens or cards, rather than having staff simply ask about residence. Most felt that some tangible item was important to reduce pressure over entry on staff. Different opinions were expressed about how the reciprocal agreement with Skokie about beach and pool access should be administered. Braithwaite opposed free beaches and said he thought tokens were an important source of revenue. Residents are willing to purchase tokens and efforts to provide free tokens to low income residents were effective. Several council members suggested that when residents apply for free token/card, they be encouraged to contribute to beach expenses.

**(d) Staff requests for additional staff.** Reid said he supported all staff requests except for one in police department. Gandarski pointed out that new staff are needed to manage operations. Mayor Biss summed up the discussion by asking Gandarski to identify priorities for new positions.

**(SP2) ARPA Fund Discussion. (a) Potential allocations.** The Mayor pointed out that the Community Foundation has held community discussions on priorities and provided a report. ECF Executive Director Sol Anderson summarized the report, emphasizing that the community wants transparency on decisions and wants to prioritize equity. Supporting employment is a priority, and the funds need to be invested in a sustainable way. Priorities are: housing, child care, investment in Black and Latinx communities, and mental health. Sarah Flax explained that broad band access is mentioned as a priority. Unlike rural areas, broad band is generally available in Evanston, but not every family can afford to access it. Funds are needed to subsidize access.

There was no action on the question of allocations.

**(d)** Braithwaite asked to take up funding for the AUX project because proponents were in the Chamber. The Growing Season, the developer of the AUX business hub, is asking \$1 million in ARPA funds. He supports the project and the innovative model of fund raising rather than bank loans. Fleming said she supports the proposal but will be abstaining because a relative is involved. Burns pointed out that there are 10 separate businesses involved which are committed to working together for mutual success. Braithwaite suggested sending this back to the Economic Development Committee with other economic development requests for overall consideration. The motion to refer passed 8-0, Fleming abstained.

**(b) Approval of \$575,000 to Sustain the Public Health Response to Covid 19 in 2022.** Kelly asked where this number came from and Ike Ogbo, Director of Health and Human Services, explained the need to allocate funds for services which had been covered by a state grant which is expiring. Staff need to be retained. Evanston has higher needs than some communities because of the large number of congregate residences. The motion to approve passed 9-0.

**(c) Approval of \$900,000 for Grant Management, Compliance and Reporting.** This would fund a full time monitor and other part-time staff for three years. Sarah Flax explained at great length how important it is to have someone fully focused on assuring that all regulations for spending ARPA funds are followed. She said the compliance monitor needs to be hired as soon as possible as funds are disbursed. In addition to one full time staff member to be hired, part of her salary and part of another staff salary will be covered. Kelly questioned the need for so much money. Reid moved to table for one week, until November 8 meeting. The motion to table passed, 8-1, Revelle voting no.

**(e) Approval for Funding Orrington Avenue and Chicago Avenue Streetscape Improvement Project to Assist Expanded Outdoor Commerce, \$440,000 and (f) Approval of \$250,000 for Outdoor Dining, Amending the Storefront Modernization Program.** Both these items were referred to Economic Development Committee for review and prioritization. The motion to review passed 9-0.

Mayor Biss proposed that he work with the City Manager to develop a plan for identifying priorities and allocation “buckets” for ARPA funds. They will produce a plan in 36 hours to send to Council members.

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:25.

