

Observer: Kristine Lofquist

Council Members present: Kelly, Wynne, Nieuwsma, Braithwaite, Burns, Suffredin, Reid, Revelle and Geracaris

Meeting started: 6:07 pm

Meeting ended: 7:39 pm

Mayor Biss called the meeting to order at 6:07 pm. Mayor Biss took the roll call and noted there was a quorum.

Announcements There were no announcements

City Manager Report – There was no report

City Clerk Report – There was no report

Public comment. There were three comments supporting the Out of Space concerts, one comment concerning the Margarita Inn, two comments about the Interim City Manager not supplying information requested by a Councilperson. There was also one commenter who spoke on due diligence of the APW in approving bills and credit cards, the tree cutting program, the Fountain Square fountain repair cost. There was one more comment on water bills.

Special Orders of Business:

SP 1 – The ARPA Plan and Workforce Development Update report was moved and seconded. Councilperson Reid suggested numerical criteria for better metrics and new categories more closely reflecting the current City committees. Sara Flax stated that the categories do not always match up with the committees in place. Councilperson Nieuwsma indicated he would like to address CARP goals. Sarah Pratt said that ARPA’s intent does not directly address CARP, but the housing goals and other goals including lead pipe removal and water and sewer issues address some CARP concerns. Councilperson Burns thanked the staff for putting together the report but noted concern about scoring criterion for census tracks/geographic areas. City staff noted that the final rule will allow them to look at issues non-geographically. It was suggested that Councilpersons work with Sara Flax on ARPA questions and she will guide them through the process as the City has not hired an ARPA specialist at this time. Councilperson Nieuwsma observed that there was a lack of a budget for retrofit work and wants to request funds from other sources. A Motion to accept the report passed 9-0.

Consent Agenda. A Motion was made and seconded to remove items H-1, A-1 A-2, A-2, A-3, A-4, A-6 and H-1 from the consent agenda. The Motion passed 9-0.

A1 – A Motion was made and seconded to approve the City of Evanston payrolls and bills lists. Councilperson Suffredin objected to a charge for refreshments for a going away party for a person involved in the beach investigation. A roll call vote was held, and the Motion passed 5-4, with Councilpersons Geracaris, Reid, Kelly, and Suffredin voting no.

A2 – A Motion was made and seconded to approve the City of Evanston’s BMO Harris Amazon Credit Card Activity for the period ending January 26, 2022. The Motion passed 8-0, with Councilperson Suffredin abstaining.

A3 – A Motion was made and seconded to approve the contract for lobbyist services with Drexwood Partners LLC. Discussion followed. Councilperson Reid noted he feels that hiring a lobbyist should wait until there is a permanent city manager. Mayor Biss stated he thinks the City of Evanston needs someone to advocate for state and federal funding (for example, for replacement of lead service lines) and there is available funding about which the City of Evanston is unaware. He noted that Evanston has tried various models in the past, including a contract lobbyist and an in-house one, and noted that when there is no help, we lose opportunities. Councilperson Braithwaite requested information on the diversity firm (Carson Group) and noted that he had not found an on-line presence for the firm. He questioned the role of the current legislative liaison staffer, noting a concern about duplication. Councilperson Wynne noted she had been initially concerned but now sees it more as an intergovernmental affairs issue, stating that the City had a lobbyist for 5-6 years, and it made enormous difference. Councilperson Nieuwsma stated he was in support of it and Councilperson Revelle asked that the staff give a monthly update on the lobbying activities. Councilperson Suffredin stated that this would be more cost effective than having an in-house lobbyist. The City representative noted that the winning bidder would partner with the Carson Group for M/W/EBE. Councilperson Reid moved to hold the issue to the next meeting, pending receipt of more information on Carson Group and Councilperson Braithwaite seconded the motion. There were no objections, so the matter was held to the next meeting.

A-4- A Motion was made seconded for a contract extension with SAFEbuilt for Supplemental Inspection and Plan Review Services. Councilperson Kelly asked whether it would be more effective to hire an inspector, noting concern that the company is not nearby and unfamiliar with Evanston, and that she would like to see a copy of the study on hiring more inspection staff prior to making a decision. Johanna Nyden, Director, Community Development noted the inspection positions are hard to fill, and that the City has used this firm in the past. Per Ms. Nyden, the individual at SAFEbuilt has been working with Evanston for a long time. In response to concerns regarding cost, it was noted that it is a “not to exceed” contract, and is not a new contract, but a contract extension. Councilperson Wynne noted that there is seasonal temporary help using retired staffer, but she is concerned going into permit season. In response to a question from Councilperson Reid, Ms. Nyden noted that the average salary for an inspector position is over \$125,000. The Motion passed 9-0.

A-6 – A Motion was made and seconded to approve a change order to contract with Garland for Civic Center gutter assessment and repairs. Councilperson Nieuwsma stated he would like to discuss this as preview to all the work needed to keep the Civic Center functioning and asked the City Engineer Lara Biggs to speak. Ms. Biggs reported that AECOM was hired to do a feasibility study on the Civic Center and Police Department, and that they are summarizing a draft report, which should complete by late Spring/early summer). She went over all of the structural issues with the building and noted that the study will have a cost per square foot for the renovation. Councilperson Kelly agreed that part of the problem is not dealing with basic preventive maintenance and staying on top of issues. The Motion passed 9-0.

It was noted that item H-1 would be held until the next meeting as the family involved (street naming) was unable to attend.

Call of the wards.

Councilperson Braithwaite reported on the Mayor's Summer Youth Program, stating they did an amazing job, with over 600 in attendance.

Councilperson Wynne announced in-person office hours at Brothers K.

Councilperson Nieuwsma announced office hours and the next Ward meeting on April 5 at 7pm at Crown. He thanked community members for the robust meeting regarding the Margarita Inn, noting he had heard their comments and was taking them into consideration

Councilperson Burns reported that the next Ward meeting would be March 31 via Zoom. He noted this is likely to be an Historic Day as School District 65 will consider a proposal for a school in the Fifth Ward. He also noted that in the future, integration in the City of Evanston should be in the hands of City Council (through changing zoning laws), and not by putting integration on the backs of students. He also thanked the member of the Mayor's Summer Youth Program and stated that the City of Evanston did not cut down trees on private property. He also noted he would have voted no on the going away party expenses for the departing employee, but the money was already spent and gone.

Councilperson Suffredin had no report.

Councilperson Revelle stated her next Ward meeting would be on March 23, at which Northwestern will detail plans for rebuilding Ryan Stadium

Councilperson Reid offered his condolences on the recent death of man in the house fire on Brummel. He stressed the importance on checking in on neighbors and seniors and thanked the fire department. He noted the next ward meeting would be the last Thursday of the month at 6 pm (virtual). He also acknowledged the historic Fifth Ward school proposal.

Council Geracaris noted that the next Ward meeting will be held virtually on March 26.

Councilperson Kelly stated that the next Ward meeting would be the following week as she will be out of town with the ETHS debate team.

A Motion was made to go into Executive session to discussion litigation issues. The Motion passed 9-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:39 p.m.