

Observer: Betty Hayford

Aldermen present: All

Media present: Evanston Now, Roundtable, Review (Tribune) NU Daily

Meeting began: 6:05pm

Meeting ended: 9:55pm

The Mayor announced that the agenda had been shifted. The meeting would start with City Council equity training, then Council would address several special orders of business, primarily budget related, then public comment would take place at the end of the meeting.

Dr. Alvin Tillery, from Northwestern, led an equity training session. (He is working pro bono for the City.) He spoke for about twenty minutes to define racial equity, a key element of racial justice. Racism assumes some racial groups are superior to others and justifies racial hierarchies. Active measures must be identified and taken to improve the standing of oppressed groups. A shared racial equity framework allows government to understand its role in creating racial inequity in the past and to rectify this inequity.

In response to a question, Deputy City Manager Kim Richardson outlined the analysis suggesting that all groups in Evanston were not benefitting from social programs leading to the decision to reorganize Human Services Programs. Mayor Hagerty noted the decision to set aside recreational cannabis tax revenue to create a reparations fund, and asked Tillery for guidance in thinking about reparations. Tillery replied that reparations, targeted actions to repair the results of racism, have never been tried in the United States. Any reparations program needs to determine who are the beneficiaries, what is the scope of reparations, and what funds are available. Should reparations be direct payments to individuals or programs? Evanston needs to answer these questions to fit the specific Evanston circumstances. Most common areas for programs are education, housing, transportation, criminal justice and work force development. The City needs to be clear about its goals, and realize that any steps may be challenged. It is easier to conceive of reparations for Jim Crow damages than slavery, because they are more immediate and identifiable. Tillery offered to continue to advise Evanston and Hagerty and aldermen expressed their appreciation.

Special orders of business. (SP1) Authorizing the City Manager to execute a lease at 633 Howard Street with "Estacion." Alderman Rainey described the proposed restaurant to be operated by the owners of Libertad in Skokie, which is planned along with another restaurant on Dempster in the former Curt's Café South site. She said it would be a strong addition to the improvement of Howard Street. The motion to approve the measure passed 8-1, with Suffredin voting no.

(SP2) Approval of FY 2020 Fiscal Budget. Interim City Manager Storlie outlined several changes to the earlier proposed budget that had been made following previous discussions. Kate Lewis-Larkin, Budget Director, presented an overview of the revised proposal. Recreational cannabis tax revenue is committed to a reparations fund. Discussion clarified the timing of cannabis revenue, which state law determines will begin in July although cannabis sales may begin in January. Discussion followed about the location(s) and impact of various cannabis sales outlets. In response to a question about the appropriate level of a reparations fund, Alderman Rue Simmons replied that a substantial fund was desirable; the city should take the lead in funding, but other organizations including banks, businesses and universities should contribute. Individual citizens could contribute also, and a brief discussion

explored the possibility of a check-off contribution on water bills or other city bills. City staff will look into the possibility. Alderman Revelle asked that the increase in parking fees exempt the Central Street business area which faces direct competition from Wilmette. Aldermen Wilson said every business district faces competition, and parking rates should be the same throughout the city. Revelle moved to exempt Central Street from the increased parking rates. The motion failed, 7-2. Revelle and Suffredin voted yes. Alderman Rainey suggested that the amusement tax be increased for certain types of events. Wilson said this is a complicated issue and should be a separate discussion at another meeting. The motion to Introduce the proposed budget passed, 9-0.

Several additional budget related items passed 9-0: **(SP3) Resolutions 100-R-19 through 115-R-10, Debt Service Property Tax Abatements; (SP4) Establishing the Adult Use Cannabis Retailers' Occupation Tax (Introduction); (SP5) City of Evanston Tax Levy totaling \$34,851,018 (Introduction); (SP6) General Assistance Tax Levy totaling \$1,113,402 (Introduction).**

(SP7) 2019 Evanston Library Fund Tax Levy totaling \$7,476,289 for Introduction was questioned by Aldermen Rainey and Fleming as too high an increase. It passed 6-3 with Suffredin also voting no.

Six more levies proposed for introduction passed 9-0: **(SP8) Special Service Area #4 Tax Levy; (SP9) Special Service Area #6 Tax Levy; (SP10) Ordinance realigning parking fines over two years; (SP11) Adding an administrative Towing Fee for some vehicle violations; (SP12) Addition of Fire Department Emergency Cost Recovery Fees; (SP13) Amending the amusement tax from 4% to 5% of admission feeds.**

Alderman Rainey then moved to place consideration of creating an R-1 liquor license which would allow liquor sales at Welsh-Ryan arena to be placed on the agenda for the next Administration and Public Works committee meeting. The motion passed 9-0.

The Mayor called for a five minute recess before **Public Comment**. The Mayor said he knew many people wanted to speak about the dismissal of Kevin Brown. Because this is a personnel matter aldermen and staff can not speak to the issue, but they will listen carefully to public concerns.

Forty-one people spoke. Former Mayor Liz Tisdahl spoke first (courtesy to a former mayor) and spoke movingly about how Kevin Brown had introduced her to the problems of youth violence and isolation in the community, and praised his excellent work in supporting youth through his leadership of the Youth Outreach Program and various efforts to assist youth in entering the employment market. All speakers expressed support for Brown, praising his dedication and commitment and leadership of a strong team. Many were skeptical about the importance of the parking ticket issue justifying his dismissal. Some suggested a conflict between Brown and his supervisor, Lawrence Hemingway, was the core of the problem, and urged council and city staff to reconsider the dismissal. Some called for an investigation and public report on how the decision was made. Some urged support and the creation of a new position for Brown even if the city did not reconsider. Both African Americans and Whites, those who have worked with him and those who have seen the results of his work, praised him. Representatives of churches, organizations and ETHS coaches praised his work. Strong emotion was expressed, but by and large the tone was civil. Many in the audience stood and conveyed support for the speakers. Clerk Reid came down from the dais to speak, and faced the crowd, not the council, said that this was a matter of principle, this reflected a pattern of racial inequity, and this decision by the City Manager showed that Evanston needs a more accountable form of government.

Call of the wards. Fleming made several referrals related to affordable housing, elimination of fees for low rental coach houses, and a review of the Human Resources manual. She wants to investigate ways to support small businesses. Council should work toward racial equity, recognizing it is a long process.

Braithwaite echoed her concerns and expressed appreciation of community members who spoke on an important issue.

Wilson also thanked citizens for coming to council and speaking. He said organizations have to have rules, and rules have to evolve to changing circumstances.

Rue Simmons praised the work of the Youth and Young Adult Department. Department and expressed frustration about how the situation was being managed. She said that the important work of the department would continue.

The meeting adjourned at 9:55pm.