

Observer: Betty Hayford

Aldermen present: All

Media present: Evanston Now, Evanston Round Table, Northwestern Daily

Meeting began: 6:15

Announcements. The Mayor and City Manager made several announcements, including the 100th Anniversary of the Evanston North Shore Bird Club and the activity of the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program.

Public comment. 24 comments. 16 on proposed building at 1714-1720 Chicago Avenue, 15 in opposition, 1 in support. Opposition centered on parking, dangerous alley, threat to two organizations and buildings next to proposed high rise. 5 on Robert Crown Center, 4 concerned with cost and 1 supporting new zamboni. 2 praised the voter guide prepared by the League of Women Voters, and 1 supported good government in general. Many speakers expressed strong feelings.

(SP1) Update on Robert Crown Center. Deputy City Manager Erica Storlie presented an update on construction of the Robert Crown Center. It is on schedule and on budget. The building should open at the end of the summer and the fields will be open by summer 2020. The new building will have twice the space of the old one. All the current programs will be continued and new programs will be instituted, bringing in new revenue. City funds for the programming will be reduced, and the reduction will be committed to a maintenance fund for the building. She presented slides showing projected costs for the building and interest, and program costs and revenues. She will return in April and June with specific MOUs with Friends of the Robert Crown Center and users. No MOUs have yet been signed and agreements with users are being negotiated. There is plenty of ice time with the two rinks. The City Manager added that many groups of citizens exist to raise money to support City activities, the Ecology Center and the Levy Center, for example. None of these groups has an MOU with the City; they raise money and contributed to programs. The City values the commitment and funds from these groups. Several aldermen noted that they contribute time and money to various city projects and are proud to do so. The report was accepted and filed.

(SP2) Purchase of Ice Resurfacers for the Robert Crown Center. This is a new zamboni to clean the ice, at a cost of \$143,425.50. The motion was approved 9-0.

(SP3) Approval of Map Amendment and Planned Development at 1714-1720 Chicago Avenue. This issue generated a long and deeply felt discussion. The lawyer for the project introduced the issue and noted the positive discussions with City staff. Alderman Fiske provided extensive remarks, starting with the positive working relations with the developer who got a new architect and greatly improved the building plan. She talked about zoning issues and proposed to split the ordinance between the zoning change and the development plan. After some discussion, the City Counsel said this was not acceptable. Further confusion ensued.

Fiske went on to support the development, saying an office building would be a great benefit to the city. Property tax and office workers would provide economic benefits. She believes the design fits the site and urges support. Alderman Wynne expressed regret for supporting the original decision to issue an RFP for the site and believed the building was wrong for the historically sensitive area. She spoke with feeling and at length about many potential problems, including the alley and the parking. Alderman Wilson says this is a bad proposal for this site. Alderman Rue Simmons said the City needs tax revenue and she supports the plan. Alderman Braithwaite spoke at some length about the importance of increased tax revenue. He predicted continued budget difficulties and program cuts that would hurt residents. He mocked concerns about safety in the alley when people were shot in alleys in his ward. Alderman Fleming mocked some of the opposition to the building, and the lack of support for issues important to the African American community. She says some opposition is simply opposition to change, and change needs to be accepted. People need to be willing to compromise. The desire to preserve an open parking lot instead of supporting development and tax funds is misplaced. Alderman Rainey asked for more information about the capacity of the developer. The developer described some of his work and his ability to complete important projects.

Eventually the question was called. Five aldermen voted for the motion (Rainey, Fleming, Fiske, Braithwaite and Rue Simmons) and four voted against (Revelle, Wynne, Wilson, Suffredin.) The motion failed because it needs a super majority to be approved.

(SP4) Authorization for Right of Reverter on Real Estate Sale Agreement. This referred to the 1714 Chicago Avenue development and was not longer relevant.

(SP5) City Council Goals. This discussion was deferred to a later meeting.

(SP6) Sale of Surplus Property Fleet Vehicles. Approved 8-0. Alderman Wynne left the meeting after the earlier vote.

(SP7) Annual Evaluation and Performance Report for the Community Development Block Grant, HOME Investment Partnerships and Emergency Solutions Grant Programs. Approved 8-0. The Report will be submitted to the Chicago Field Office of HUD.

(SP8) Special Events in City Parks. Council considered proposed events for 2019, including one new event. The motion passed 8-0.

The meeting adjourned to Executive Session at 9:50 pm.