

Observer: Betty Hayford

Council members present: Eight. Suffredin absent.

Meeting began: 6:15pm

Meeting ended: 9:00pm

Announcements. Mayor Biss explained the meeting is held over Zoom, and reminded Evanstonians of new vaccination requirements and concern over rapidly spreading Covid.

City Manager Gandurski and the Parking Manager announced that vehicle mobilization restraints (booting) were being restored after pandemic cessation. So far, no vehicles have received boots.

Public comment. 7 comments, mixed group of concerns. 2 supported establishing a mental health Living Room in Evanston; 2 opposed reappointment of Police Chief Eddington; 2 opposed various budget and spending items and called for more transparency, 1 supported expanded liquor licenses.

Special orders of Business. SP1, Discussion of a Living Room in Evanston to Provide Immediate Care to Evanstonians in Mental Health Crisis. Council member Fleming recounted history of sub-committee discussions on alternative responses to 911 calls, investigation of models in other cities, and agencies that could provide services for Evanston. A representative from Trilogy explained the Living Room model, (currently in Skokie) providing safe Living Room site as alternative to hospital ER. Clients are more likely to find sympathetic support including building rapport, making an assessment, analyzing conditions and making a treatment plan. Trilogy, along with Turning Point, have state grants. Speakers made the point that different agencies worked together to provide appropriate services. The Skokie Living Room has been in operation for 10 years and has a very strong success rate in resolving crises. This keeps clients out of Emergency Rooms and enables medics and other health resources to use their skills where most needed.

Mayor Biss explained that Amita Health has offered use of a small house on Elmwood behind St. Francis for the Living Room. Renovations are needed, and ARPA Funds could be used. There are options for outside funding to support services. Councilmembers Fleming and Reville said their committee continues to work to flesh out options and identify funding. Burns asked several questions about the building and possible expansion; City Engineer Biggs explained that current work is focused on making the space functional, and not on expansion. Nieuwsma agreed that this is a good use of ARPA funds, but additional ARPA funds should be used for economic development to provide revenue for on-going operations. He said that accountability for Living Room operations should be clear, as well as the role of the Police and Fire Departments in providing clients. Fleming agreed that the 911 staff needed to be trained to divert calls to the Living Room.

Council discussion was strongly supportive of the creation of a Living Room.

SP2. Approval of Additional Funding for Youth Programs to Address Youth Violence. ARPA funding of \$552,500 will support expansion of the "My City, Your City, Our City" initiative. Funds will be used for a variety of programs to support youth and family violence prevention strategies. Staff will return in April to request additional fund for the Workforce Development Program. Audrey Thompson made a brief presentation and said proposals were modeled on national discussion of best practices. The motion was passed, 8-0.

Consent agenda. Items A15 to A21 were removed from the consent agenda. All items related to changes in Liquor license numbers or hours. It was moved to suspend the rules to allow for Introduction and Action in this meeting. The motion to suspend the rules passed, 8-0. The consent agenda passed 8-0.

Call of the Wards. Several meetings were announced. Council member Reid said it was time to revisit the issue of hazard pay for front lines workers in the pandemic. He moved to put the issue on the January 24 agenda as a special order of business. His original proposal was employees of all large businesses. This proposal is apparently limited to large grocery stores. Apparently, there is a draft proposal, but it is not in the packet. Fleming suggested it should go to the Referrals Committee, but Reid said it had been discussed in June and was a timely topic. Fleming and Braithwaite called for more discussion with businesses. Nieuwsma and Wynne said more discussion and information are needed. Revelle suggested, and then moved, to put the item on the agenda for discussion, not action. Her amendment passed, 7-1, only Reid voting against. The motion to put the issue as a discussion item on the agenda passed 7-1.

Braithwaite said that the Reparations Committee will be working this week on procedures for awarding reparations payments to 16 residents applying for housing support. Burns added that the Here to Stay Working Group of residents, relators and small developers is working to identify options for expanded affordable housing.

The meeting adjourned to Executive Session at 9:00pm.