

Observer: Kristine Loftgrin

Aldermen present: All.

Meeting started: 7:05 pm

Meeting ended: 8:30 pm

Alderman Wilson moved to suspend the rules to allow having a virtual meeting following emergency guidelines from Governor Pritzker because of the pandemic. The motion was seconded and passed 7-0.

Announcements. The Mayor reported that the snowfall this evening is predicted to be the biggest of the year thus far and reminded citizens to be careful and to help out their neighbors. He then updated the Council on the status of COVID-19 vaccines, noting that the City had sent out quite a bit of information over the past week. The Mayor indicated that the City is now in Phase 1B of vaccine distributions (which applies to residents age 85 and above) and that individuals age 75 and older received notices regarding vaccines last week. He stated that the Department of Public Health is working to come up with a plan for home-bound seniors and that individuals in senior living facilities will most likely receive their COVID vaccines through CVS and Walgreens. Ike Ogbo, Director of Health and Human Services indicated that seniors without access to technology can call the City's 311 number to complete the vaccine survey. The Mayor then provided an overview of the COVID-19 situation and asserted that the pandemic remains dangerous and all precautions should be continued. He reported that community centers will be opening soon on a limited basis and that there will be limited indoor dining now that the region is moving into another phase of the virus restrictions

The City Manager reported on three items. With regard to the snow events over the next 24-hours, she requested voluntary compliance so snow can be moved without parking restrictions. Next, she reminded election candidate that campaign signs are not allowed on parkways. Finally, she introduced the Interim Fire Chief Paul Polep.

The City Clerk presented election information on the city website and stated that the primary will be held on February 23. He reviewed the early voting hours at the Civic Center and went over the mail-in ballot process.

Public comment. Five comments. Two people spoke on budget issues, including the need to reduce spending, put a moratorium on new projects and not commit to the reserve fund; others expressed their concern regarding snow removal and Northwestern University's use of city fire department services. Several spoke about zoning and affordable housing concerns.

(SP2) Resolution Committing to Funding General Fund Reserves by 2025. The Resolution reaffirms Council's previous commitment to a reserve fund of 16.6% of General Fund expenses. A Motion was made and seconded to approve the Resolution. Discussion followed, including an explanation by the City Manager. The Mayor noted that the Resolution does not mean that property taxes will need to increase, and that the funding can come from other sources or expenditure reductions Alderman Rainey moved to amend the resolution to note that it will not raise property taxes. There was no second. Alderman Fleming raised concerns and expressed the need for clearer parameters. The meeting was briefly suspended due to a power outage at the Civic Center. During that time, the Mayor reported that The Motion passed on a roll call vote 5-4. Fleming, Rainey, Rue Simmons, Suffredin voted no.

Consent agenda. The Mayor asked Aldermen to remove items from the consent agenda. Only item (A6) was removed. It was moved and seconded to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed 9-0.

Alderman Suffredin introduced (A6) Two-Year Security Contract Extension with Phoenix Security for security services at the Morton Civic Center and the City-Owned Parking garages. Suffredin was concerned that the need for security during the pandemic was unclear and a more coherent plan was needed, particularly in regard to homeless people sheltering in the garages. Braithwaite explained that security is still needed. The motion passed 8-1, Suffredin voting no.

Call of the wards. Several aldermen announced meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30.