

City of Northville
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
January 4, 2016

Mayor Roth called the meeting to order with the Pledge of Allegiance at 7:30 p.m. in the City of Northville Municipal Building, City Council Chambers, 215 W. Main Street, Northville, Michigan, 48167.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Ken Roth, Mayor Pro Tem James Allen, Councilmembers Nancy Darga, Sam Ekong, and Marilyn Price

Absent: None

Also Present: City Manager Patrick Sullivan, City Clerk Dianne Massa, Parks and Recreation Director Jason Spiller, reporter from Northville Record, and four citizens

PRESENTATIONS

A. Citizens Comments None

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND CONSENT AGENDA

Boards and Commission Appointments and Resolution to Establish Guidelines for Hardship Exemptions were removed from the Consent Agenda and added to New Business.

Motion Darga, seconded by Allen to adopt the agenda and consent agenda as amended:

Approve City Council Minutes:

- Regular Meeting 12/21/15

Receive Bills List:

- Checks #96722 to #96895, EFT #500223

- Checks #96896 to #96979

Receive Board and Commission Minutes: None

Receive Departmental Reports: None

Resolution for March Board of Review

Motion carried unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Extension of Mowing and Fertilization Services / Parks and Recreation

In 2012, the Parks and Recreation Department went out for bids for professional mowing and fertilizing services for the parks and facilities. Davey Tree Commercial Landscape Service of Lake Orion, Michigan, was the lowest bidder and awarded the contract for three years at the 2012 fixed rate.

Davey Tree has been providing quality service for the Northville Department of Parks and Recreation since 2012. They are a reputable company in good standing and have a great rapport with the Parks Division. Davey Tree has offered to extend the 2012 fixed prices for the next three years 2016-2019. Costs associated with the professional mowing and fertilizing services is budgeted in each specific park and facility.

City Council Comments, and Discussion: In response to a question from City Council, it was explained that the 2012 base price is the same for years 2016-2019. Further, the contractor does not have the ability to raise the price due to fluctuation of fuel price or other outside factors.

Motion Darga, seconded by Price to accept the pricing extension and authorize the Parks and Recreation Director to enter into a three (3) year contract extension with Davey Tree Commercial Lawn Service of Lake Orion. **Motion carried unanimously.**

B. Board and Commission Appointments (moved from Consent Agenda)

A comment from City Council questioned the Selection Committee's standard process of review when determining appointments and reappointments to boards and commissions, if it is appropriate for a board member to serve on more than one board/commission, and how vacancies are publicized.

Currently, the Selection Committee's reviews all initial applications for appropriateness and content. Renewals do not refile their application. As part of the upcoming goals and objectives special meeting, City Council will discuss the board and commission appointment process. The goal is to create a better-defined process that includes standards of performance and review so that the board/commission members are aware of the expectation. The standards could be the criteria to use for reappointment. Publicizing vacancies on the boards and commissions is via word of mouth within the various boards, applicant recruitment by City Council members, and notices posted on the website. Notices are published in the paper when directed by the Selection Committee.

It was acknowledged that it is difficult to find dedicated people to volunteer their time to serve the community. Additional comments noted the desire to have more people get involved, the belief that a more diverse membership is needed, and the need to make volunteering to serve more desirable and approachable, especially for those that have work schedules and family obligations that make serving on a board/commission more difficult. Items of discussion will include more public outreach beyond the website, consideration of establishing term limits, and if serving on multiple boards/commissions is appropriate. City Council was encouraged to bring their ideas to this meeting.

Motion Price, seconded by Allen to appoint:

- Janice Cantelon to fill a vacancy on the Board of Review (regular member), with a term expiration of January 1, 2019;
- Chuck Murdock to fill a vacancy on the Historic District Commission with a term expiration of January 1, 2017;

as recommended by the Board and Commission Selection Committee. **Motion carried unanimously.**

C. Resolution to Establish Guidelines for Hardship Exemptions (moved from Consent Agenda)

MCL 211.7u allows the owner and occupant of a principal residence exemption from taxation, in whole or part, by reason of poverty in the judgment of the Board of Review. Each year, the Board of Review is required to draft and approve guidelines. The Hardship Exemption Guidelines were amended December

10, 2013 to comply with Michigan Tax Tribunal decisions and City practice. No changes were recommended for 2016 by the Board of Review.

City Council Comments, and Discussion: A comment from City Council questioned whether the City was required to have an ordinance that gave the authority to adopt and update hardship exemption guidelines for the Board of Review. It was responded that Staff was not certain if a hardship exemption ordinance is required; however, it was explained that if the City uses hardship exemptions, there must be a written policy adopted by the governing body. The purpose of the guidelines developed by the Board of Review in 2013 was to establish criteria for the Board of Review to use when determining the eligibility of a hardship exemption.

Discussion ensued pertaining to the proposed hardship exemption guidelines, how the guidelines might apply to a homeowner that has lost their home due to unemployment, does the Board of Review ever get to a point where they cannot grant the exemptions, the eligibility requirements outlined in Section 2(a), and the number of applicants that might be rejected because they have a hardship that doesn't meet these guidelines.

Further explanation was given pertaining to the appeal process for commercial property owners. A comment from City Council noted that several business owners voiced frustration at the perceived lack of a clear process to seek tax relief. A separate comment from City Council countered that their personal experience in appealing a commercial assessment in different communities found that the appeal process is fairly straight-forward. The accessibility of forms, directions, and submission information was available on-line both with the municipality and state. It was acknowledged that the forms and content required is lengthy, but straight-forward. It was also clarified that per Section 1(a) of the policy, the hardship guidelines do not apply to commercial property as it states as you must be an owner and occupy the property as a principal residence in requesting an exemption for that property.

A separate comment from City Council questioned if there was a typo in Section 2(a) in the paragraph that states the definition of income used will be that defined by the Federal Bureau of Census. Number 5 in this section states “5) Alimony, child support, and military family allotments of other regular support from an absent family member or someone not living in the household.” It was questioned if the word “of” should be “or” so that this section states: “5) Alimony, child support, and military family allotments or other regular support from an absent family member or someone not living in the household.” Staff will verify the Federal Census Bureau definition and make the correction if appropriate.

Motion Price, seconded by Allen to concur with the recommendation of the Board of Review and adopt the Resolution to establish Hardship Exemption Guidelines for 2016 as presented, subject to Staff's verification of the Census Bureau definition of income. **Motion carried unanimously.**

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS

A. Mayor and Council Communications

Roth noted that City Council's Goals and Objectives meeting will be held January 11, 2016, at 7:00 p.m. In addition to the goals drafted by City staff, Roth is creating a separate list of goals and topics for discussion at that meeting (i.e. boards/commission appointment process). City Council was encouraged to consider drafting their own lists of goals and topics for discussion and submit them to the Mayor before the meeting. No discussion would occur before the January 11th meeting. It was reminded that the ideas should be more “procedural” and should not have a significant financial impact on the City's budget.

Roth also questioned a communication received from the Conference of Western Wayne pertaining to 911 reimbursement. The City Manager was directed to advise City Council if a reimbursement is received, and the reimbursement amount.

Darga spoke of the annual Mill Race Village meeting to be held on January 21st. She encouraged people to become a member of the Northville Historical Society.

B. Staff Communications None

C. Citizen Comments

Jamie Jones, 20051 Springwood Ct, Northville (Township) questioned the status of the Begonia Brothers property located on N. Center Street (former Sawmill location). The property appears to be vacant and has signs seeking a developer/purchaser.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Adjournment: 7:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dianne Massa, CMC
City Clerk

Ken Roth
Mayor

Approved as submitted: 01/19/2016