

City of Northville
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
January 11, 2016

Mayor Roth called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. in the Northville City Hall Council Chambers, 215 West Main Street, Northville, Michigan.

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, Finance Director/Treasurer Sandi Wiktorowski, Director of Public Works James Gallogly, Fire Chief Stephen Ott, Police Chief Michael Carlson, DDA Executive Director Lori Ward, City Clerk Dianne Massa, Northville Youth Assistance Director Sue Campbell, Housing Director Sherry Necelis, Senior Services Coordinator Suzie Johnson, Parks and Recreation Director Jason Spiller, reporter from Northville Record, and five citizens.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

None

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion Allen, seconded by Ekong to approve the agenda as presented. **Motion carried unanimously.**

FY 2016-2017 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND PRIORITIES

The City Manager briefly reviewed the FY 2015-2016 City Council Goals, Objectives and Priorities. City Council noted that although staffing levels have decreased, in many cases the City is delivering better service. The Fire Department service to the City of Plymouth was cited an example.

As the City Council had been given written documentation of the Staff's goals and objectives prior to the meeting, it was determined Department verbal presentations were not necessary. For the benefit of the citizens present at the meeting, the Mayor read aloud the goals for each Department. Staff responded to questions from City Council, summarized as follows:

Building Department

Add to Building Department goals: Addition of the procedures and contacts for Michigan Department of Environmental Quality/City requirements, flood plain issues and information for projects near the river, soil erosion permit requirements and contacts. This should be a separate handout and also included with the building permit application.

Upon completion of the Historic District Survey, City Council has requested a special meeting to review the results.

City Clerk and Elections

Staff further explained that, upon conducting a walking tour of the City and the downtown, several businesses are found to be without a business license (about 10-12 annually). Most do not realize they need a license.

In response to a question about the goal of relocating the polling location for Precinct 2, it was explained that Precinct 2 is located at Amerman School. More frequently, school is in session on Election Day. Having voters in the building is a safety concern of the school district. Doors to polling places must remain unlocked, which contradicts the school safety procedure of locking doors while school is in session. The optimal solution would be to relocate the Precinct 2 polling location to the Community Center. However, parking is of concern, especially with the uncertainty of the future of Old Village School and if sold to a private developer, would the parking lot be available for voter use.

Downtown Development Authority

Discussion ensued pertaining to the Wayfinding Sign project and if feedback has been received to determine if the signs are effective, especially as it pertains to parking locations.

It was questioned if the City/DDA has a strategy for assisting in redevelopment efforts that might encounter contamination (i.e. Foundry Flask, car wash). It was explained that the City has partnered in cleanup efforts with developers and assisted them in securing grant funds. The Garage Restaurant was cited as an example. The MDEQ has a database of contaminated land and some of the City's sites are included in that list. As redevelopment progresses, the City will continue to assist in helping developers secure remediation funding.

Add to DDA goals: Explore developing a feedback program to determine if the uniformity of the wayfinding signs is helping people find/use smaller, seldom-used lots.

Add to Building Department goals: Use the MDEQ site to create a map of known contaminated land. Include information on grant opportunities to assist in funding cleanup if available.

Add to DDA/DPW goals: Research use of alternate trash cans or other type of recycling boxes that are environmentally friendly and place those in the downtowns during special events (i.e. cardboard recycling boxes for plastic water bottles).

Finance and Administrative Services

Questions pertained to identity theft training and prevention to protect bank account and social security information. It was determined that no high tech expertise or consultation should be needed.

Fire Department

Comments from City Council spoke of the Fire Station and its inadequacy for current equipment. The new ladder truck is too tall and must be stored at the Plymouth Station. A formal evaluation is needed to determine the future needs of the Department and equipment.

Add to Fire Department goals: The goal pertaining to providing adequate facilities for Department operations should be expanded to have the Fire Chief determine if an in-depth current and future needs assessment for facilities and equipment could be done by Staff. Some preliminary assessments for working space needs were done as part of the City Hall renovation/relocation study with the School District.

Housing Commission

No questions or discussion.

Parks and Recreation

No questions or discussion.

Police Department

No questions or discussion.

Department of Public Works

Discussion ensued pertaining to capital improvements and considering using reserves to fund more capital improvements. Combining capital improvements with water and sewer infrastructure improvements was also discussed.

Further explanation was given pertaining to “running water accounts.”

In response to questions about tree maintenance, it was explained that small trees are trimmed by DPW; trimming of larger trees is outsourced to a contractor.

Comments pertaining to the weekly brush collection service noted that residents are using this service, there have not been any negative comments/feedback on this program, and the minimal monthly cost of \$1.71/month assessed to residents as part of their solid waste billing is not significant enough to warrant reducing this program to bi-monthly or monthly service.

The fiscal condition of the cemetery was questioned. The Finance Director will provide City Council with a report.

Youth Assistance

No questions or discussion.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND PRIORITIES FOR FY 2016-2017

City Council discussion determined the following goals, broadly described as follows:

High Priority

Long-Term Fiscal and Financial Stability: Continuation of the long-term fiscal and financial stability efforts outlined in the City Manager’s report to City Council dated January 11, 2016. Areas of focus include health insurance cost containment, Other Post-employment Benefits (OPEB), pension funding, and increasing fund balance.

Medium Priority

Water and Sewer System Improvements: Remain current with the commitment to Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) to clean 20% of the City’s sanitary sewer system each year to comply with Abatement Order No. 2096. To minimize the possibility of sanitary sewer backups in the City, efforts to clean 50% of the City’s sanitary sewers should continue. Continue efforts to detect water loss and continue to monitor the City’s water control. Continue to partner with Wayne County and several other neighboring communities to design a Long Term Corrective Action Plan (LTCAP) for sanitary sewer excess flow as required under Final Order of Abatement 2096 with MDEQ. Planning and design work done in FY2016 and FY2017 is expected to lead to construction in FY2018.

Implementation of Downtown Strategic Plan/Preservation of Downtown Funding: The majority of the projects and programs outlined in the Downtown Strategic Plan have been implemented. The need

exists for an updated Strategic Plan for downtown Northville to address the new challenges facing the community. The market information contained in the current plan is outdated and ineffective and should be updated as part of the plan.

It is expected that a comprehensive overhaul of Tax Increment Financing, which would address all taxing jurisdictions levied in the downtown, could be introduced in 2016. The City should continue to monitor efforts in Lansing that would reduce or eliminate the DDA and TIFA funding mechanisms and work with our legislators to mitigate any negative impact on downtown Northville.

Street, Sidewalk, and Bike Path Improvement Connectivity: Continue the annual crack sealing program and the annual street and sidewalk program approved in 1997.

Completion of Joint Study with Northville Public Schools for Possible Co-Location of Offices: The City continues to meet with NPS staff to determine the feasibility of co-locating City and School administrative offices in the Old Village School building. The ongoing study is examining the cost of renovation of the Old Village School building, and also the cost of each organization remaining in their present location given the required maintenance and renovation required over the next 20 years.

Lower Priority

Retaining the Retail Operation of the Northville Post Office within the Central Business District: The Post Office building is under lease through 2016. Staff will continue to work with the United States Postal Service (USPS) to express support for keeping the post office in the downtown. Future land use of the city-owned property, south of the Post Office, was addressed in the Community Master Plan update. The City should consider redevelopment options consistent with the Master Plan.

Development and Redevelopment Issues: Work to continue quality development and redevelopment of the Cady Street Corridor. Continue to monitor potential redevelopment opportunities both in the Cady Street District and also the Northville Downs property.

Cemetery Build-Out: Continue working to develop the remaining portion of Rural Hill Cemetery within available resources. Remaining burial lots will likely be sold out within two years. A Phase II expansion is proposed for FY2017 to continue to provide burial options for City of Northville residents.

River Bank Stabilization: City Staff should continue to monitor funding and grant opportunities to address river bank erosion and stabilizing the river banks.

Projects on Hold

Mill Pond Improvements/Watershed Enhancements are on hold due to lack of available funding sources. Staff will continue to monitor funding opportunities.

In addition, City Council discussed the goals offered by the Mayor. It was determined these would be added as goals and include a suggested a time-frame in which to accomplish the goal:

Goals - short term (1-3 months)

- Identify and implement a cost-effective method to video record Council meetings and post to City website. The goal of transparency and expanding interactions with residents outweighed concerns of grandstanding, drama, and combative behavior that has occurred in other communities that video Council meetings.

- Improve/follow up DPW's goal from last year on water loss through leak detection. Develop a plan to improve if a 15% water loss still exists. Meter replacement might be necessary as the current meters are almost 20 years old. Water rates are a big concern for residents.
- Contact neighborhoods regarding DPW's goal to minimize sewer backups and determine if sewer cleaning and repairs have been successful. Need to communicate to residents when sewer improvement projects are completed. Need to develop a plan for future needs and improvements.
- Review and update as needed, the goal regarding keeping the Post Office at current location, and develop a plan for the properties
- Receive updates on DPW's running water accounts list and determine if additional steps need to occur. If necessary, develop a plan to reduce the number of accounts.
- Develop/implement performance review/feedback/expectations for the City Manager and Departments from Mayor and City Council. The City Manager will provide City Council with samples from other communities.

Goals - medium term (3-12 months)

- Refine appointment process for Board and Commission appointments. Develop written guidelines for the appointment process. Implement standards of practice for members. Increase new applicant outreach and recruitment through Northville Matters and City News. There is a desire to have more diversity on the boards/commissions. More individuals are needed to serve to decrease having commissioners serving on multiple boards.
- Improve two-way communication with residents. Develop improved communication plan for regular, valued, and more detailed communication with residents. There is a need for more frequent and detailed dialog with residents, especially for issues pertaining to real estate, development, and infrastructure. Communication with residents should be encouraged.
- Improve website and community outreach; both frequency and methods. Explore using Twitter and expanding Facebook beyond use by the DDA. The website is difficult to navigate and looks outdated. Explore what other communities are doing with Twitter and Facebook. Council acknowledged that the City does not have a communications staff like other communities, and monitoring Twitter and Facebook on a frequent and regular basis could be challenging.
- Create, adopt, and implement a plan for upgrading water and sewer lines on Cady Street in anticipation of development. Review payment option and tap fee options. There should also be a general, uniform policy and specific plan for the entire City. The City Manager and DPW Director should create an actionable goal.
- Analyze and develop a long-term plan for City Hall offices and include public input as needed. There is a need to reach a resolution with school district on plans for Old Village School. NPS needs to know if the City is interested in pursuing this project. What the vision is for a City/School complex needs to be explored and evaluated.

Comments from the City Manager spoke of the concern in funding a co-location project when funding is needed for street and infrastructure improvements. Comments from City Council countered that we need to know the vision the City wants for a municipal complex and what resources are available to fund this project other than the funds on-hand. There may be partnering opportunities with the school district or another developer. Historic tax credits may be available as well. Comments from citizens present noted that the public needs to be included in the discussions. Many residents may not have heard about this proposal and City Council may find that the community does not want this project.

- Investigate/implement high tech parking lot use survey and explore developing an app to help with visitor parking in the downtown.
- Increase parking and traffic enforcement, primarily in the downtown. Does the Police Department have staff to delegate time for pro-active enforcement instead of reactive enforcement? It was noted without a Records Clerk, the day shift is handling clerical matters verses police matters.
- Increase traffic enforcement presence in the neighborhoods.
- Review the snow removal program. Are the most effective/cost effective/environmentally friendly methods being used for this program? The DPW Director will analyze the program and provide a report to City Council.
- Develop City Council standards of practice, and the roles and expectations for Councilmembers at meetings and with the public. The City Manager will research other communities for examples.
- Initiate plan for redevelopment of City property south of the Post Office. Consider retaining vacant properties as land available for possible Fire Station expansion needs.
- Develop plan for permanent location for Farmers Market.

Goals – long-term (longer than 1 year)

- Infrastructure review. Establish a citizen’s review committee to review current infrastructure conditions and develop funding options if improvements are deemed necessary. Review roads, sewers, water lines, technology, and communication infrastructure and come up with an analysis and a recommendation. Analyze effects of recent state and federal legislation on revenue. Funding options should be explored. The process should mimic the Citizens Budget Review Committee.
- Educate the community and have community dialogue on water rates and effective strategies to keep water rates low. Northville Township used a public forum pertaining to water rates, and how rates are calculated by the Detroit Water and Sewer Department.
- Review the Shared-Services Agreement with the Township and develop an updated formula for how each municipality’s share is calculated. The formula should be revised if appropriate. The Agreement should also stipulate how costs are allocated for improvements/repairs in park system.
- Complete the Historic District Survey and implement plan for use of data. The survey results and plan for use should be presented to the public at a special meeting.
- Complete new strategic plan/retail study/visioning sessions with community (DDA and Council level involvement).

An email communication from a resident noted that the City focuses a lot of effort and time to the downtown. A vision and focus is needed for the residential areas as well.

Additional goals from Council included:

- Explore redesign and redevelopment of the City Entrance Signs (Gateways to the City).
- Directional signage from I-275 and other major expressways to downtown Northville.
- Expand the Non-Motorized Plan to create connectivity from neighborhood to neighborhood. Investigate pedestrian connectivity (walking trails).

- Increase environmental protection awareness. Need to create engaging public relations tools to the City residents involved and participating in the Rouge Rescue and other environmental protection efforts.

The City Manager was directed to summarize the proposed FY2016-2017 City Council goals, objectives, and priorities and place them on a future agenda for City Council review and adoption.

The Mayor voiced appreciation to the City Manager and Department Heads for preparing their goals and to City Council for their thoughts and consideration of goals. The goal setting meeting is important.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mayor and Council None

Citizen Comments

Charles Lapham, Township resident, questioned which public body made the appointments to the Historic District Commission (HDC) and how HDC members might be removed. It was explained that board and commission appointments are Mayor and City Council appointments and HDC members are appointed by City Council.

There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned.

Adjournment: 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dianne Massa, CMC
City Clerk

Ken Roth
Mayor

Approved as submitted: 2/1/2016