

City of Northville
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
January 9, 2017

Mayor Roth called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Northville City Hall Council Chambers, 215 West Main Street, Northville, Michigan.

Mayor Roth read a statement informing those present that the City Council meeting was being recorded for rebroadcast on the City's website. By remaining at the meeting, consent is inferred by those present to have their voice and image recorded and posted on the City's website.

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, Housing Director Sherry Necelis, Parks and Recreation Director Mark Gasche, reporter from Northville Record, and six citizens.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

None

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

FY 2017-2018 GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND PRIORITIES

The City Manager briefly reviewed the FY 2016-2017 City Council Goals, Objectives and Priorities.

City Council commended Staff on the progression of expanded communication to the public. Discussion noted that the City now has a Facebook presence and will soon launch Twitter. Key personnel will be trained to post on social media as this is an effective tool to quickly get out non-emergency events and information to the public.

Discussion ensued pertaining to Abatement Order No. 2096 with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and the partnering with Wayne County and several other neighboring communities to work on the required Long Term Corrective Action Plan for sanitary sewer excess flow.

City Council commended the City Manager and Staff as the FY2017 goals were ambitious and it was a successful year in meeting the goals. This was a positive step for the City and its residents.

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. Staff responded to questions from City Council, summarized as follows:

Building Department

Add goal: Improve the accessibility of the Building Department's online inspection scheduling option. The technology needs to be more prominent as Council wants residents and builders to use this technology verses calling the Building Department to schedule inspections.

In response to a question from City Council, Staff confirmed that the information sheet being developed by the Building Department, to be given to builders or homeowners doing work near floodplains or environmentally sensitive sites, will provide links to agencies such as MDEQ and FEMA, as well as contact information for soil erosion.

The status of the Historic District survey grant application was provided.

City Clerk and Elections

In response to a question about the status of 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. 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, the parking lot availability for voter use might be in jeopardy. This goal is on hold.

Communications

While the Facebook page and upcoming Twitter launch were commended, a comment from Council spoke of the need to not lose sight of the importance of print media and mailings. Many City residents do not use a computer and print media is their main form of receiving communication from the City.

Downtown Development Authority

Discussion ensued pertaining to the need to fully staff the DDA office. The DDA Director is waiting the results of the Strategic Plan. Once the action plan has been developed, the DDA can discuss and determine the skill set needed for DDA staffing. Other comments pertained to the pros and cons of hiring in-office staff verses using consultants or contracting work.

Discussion ensued regarding the bike plaza, the Cady Corridor, and the Parking Committee's involvement in all modes of transportation. The City and the downtown is a magnet for cyclers.

Revise goal: From "reduce number of office and services businesses on first floor" to "Increase presence of retail on first floor." This goal was at the request of downtown business owners that wished to reserve the first floor of buildings for a retail and restaurant presence, and have service type businesses on the second floor and above.

Finance, Tax/Assessing, and Technology Services

Questions were raised pertaining to the ability to pay property taxes online and the need to promote the availability of this option. Residents should be encouraged to use online features.

A comment from City Council asked for an explanation of the procedure used by Tax Department staff when returning telephone calls left on voice mail. A separate comment noted the need to promote the use of electronic communication over phone calls when contacting City Hall. This helps the resident and Staff.

Staff further explained the purpose of the goal to analyze the overhead charge from the General Fund to other funds. In the past, the overhead amount charged to other funds has been incrementally increased. The plan is to do a more thorough review to ensure the amount charged is accurate.

Add goal: Explore the Oakland County Investment Pool as another investment option.

Add goal: Accounting Standards require the City to show the OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) liability in the financial statements. City Council requested this be explained to the public. A series of articles was suggested that would 1) Explain OPEB, 2) How to pay for/fund OPEB, 3) Where the City is in funding OPEB compared to other communities, and 4) Funding requirements.

Add goal: Work with the Communications Manager to communicate to the public the savings that will be realized through the recent contract negotiations with the labor unions.

Add goal: Promote and encourage use of technology by residents (online services, email, etc.) to improve staff efficiency. (This goal was mentioned several times throughout the meeting)

Fire Department

Discussion ensued pertaining to the home fire safety evaluation program and replacement of fire truck in FY19 and rescue unit in FY20.

Comments from City Council spoke of the Fire Station and its inadequacy regarding capacity for current equipment. The new ladder truck is too tall and must be stored at the Plymouth Station.

Add goal: Assess and determine long-term needs for Fire Department facilities and equipment.

Housing Commission

No questions or discussion.

Parks and Recreation

Discussion ensued pertaining to the deteriorated condition of the wood play structure at Ford Field.

Add goal: Replace/repair wood play structure. This could be incorporated into the five-year Recreation Plan.

Police Department

Add goal: Analyze and determine if a second portable speed limit sign is needed.

Add goal: Utilize volunteers/resources to assist the Police Department with traffic during special events. A comment from Council noted that Schoolcraft Community College public safety officers are interested in helping with events.

The Police Department was commended on how they handle traffic during special events.

Department of Public Works

Discussion ensued pertaining to water leak surveys. Add goal: Perform two leak surveys each year.

Add goal: Explore “fix my city” application or other cell phone application to see if this technology would be of use to the City and residents.

Add goal: Explore sharing street sweeper cost/use with a neighboring community. Analyze cost to contract out service, cost of machine, and number of hours worked by Staff to clean streets.

Add goal: Rebid/negotiate solid waste contract.

Youth Assistance

As the Youth Assistance Director was absent (excused), the NYA council liaison further explained the plan for a proposed youth recognition program to reinforce positive behavior.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND PRIORITIES FOR FY 2017-2018

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 9, 2017.

Communications: Continue to improve and expand city-wide communications.

Medium Priority

Manager/Department Evaluations: Implementation of evaluation/annual review of the City Manager based on progress toward accomplishment of goals identified by City Council and Departments.

Water and Sewer System Improvements: Continue to remain current with the commitments 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 FY2017 is expected to lead to construction in FY2018.

Implementation of Downtown Strategic Plan/Preservation of Downtown Funding: Continue with progress to complete the update of the 2006 Strategic Plan.

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 with street improvements.

Continue with implementation and installation of the signage plan for the non-motorized path that connects Northville to Maybury Park and Edward Hines Park.

Completion of Joint Study with Northville Public Schools for Possible Co-Location of Offices: Cost estimates for the co-location project were presented. Due to other financial needs, pursuing a co-location project at this time is not feasible. The school district is evaluating proposals to determine the preferred plan redevelopment of the property. The City is working with an architect to develop alternatives for renovating City hall. Three alternative plans are being evaluated by Administration. The preferred alternatives will be costed out and reported to Council.

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 in 2017.

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: Remaining burial lots will likely be sold out in FY2018. A Phase II expansion is proposed to continue to provide burial options for City of Northville residents. Though it may not be possible to show a profit in the cemetery operations, City Council should continue to look for ways to reduce the cemetery's drain on the City's General Fund before moving forward with further development.

Watershed/Environmental Protection: Continue to pursue grant funding to naturalize and stabilize the banks of the Johnson Creek in Fish Hatchery Park. Have the Building Department develop an information sheet to be given to builders or homeowners doing work near floodplains or environmentally sensitive sites.

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.

Add to Goals

Consider quarterly or biannual meeting of City Council and chairperson from the boards and commissions to facilitate greater cross-communication, and provide a forum for the various boards to share its goals and concerns.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mayor and Council

Darga spoke of the International Auto Show in Detroit.

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

Adjournment: 8:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dianne Massa, CMC
City Clerk

Ken Roth
Mayor

Approved as submitted: 2/6/17