

CITY OF STERLING HEIGHTS
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL
STRATEGIC PLANNING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 25, 2022
IN COMMUNITY CENTER

1. Mayor Pro-Tem Liz Sierawski called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.
2. Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and Melanie D. Ryska, City Clerk, gave the Invocation.
3. Council Members present at roll call: Deanna Koski, Maria G. Schmidt, Liz Sierawski, Henry Yanez, Barbara A. Ziarko.

Absent: Michael C. Taylor (Michael V. Radtke Jr. arrived at 8:34 a.m.)

Also Present: Mark Vanderpool, City Manager; Marc D. Kaszubski, City Attorney;

Melanie D. Ryska, City Clerk; Carol Sobosky, Recording Secretary.

4. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Moved by Koski, seconded by Ziarko, to approve the Agenda as presented.

Yes: All. The motion carried.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski stated that Mayor Taylor is not present today due to illness, so she will be chairing the meeting until 1:30 p.m., at which time she must leave due to a business requirement. At that time, she will entertain a motion to appoint a Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

5. **REPORT FROM CITY MANAGER**

Mr. Vanderpool stated he is pleased to kick off the annual Strategic Planning Session, which provides an opportunity to look at a number of initiatives and start to plan for the upcoming year and the years ahead. This session affords City Council an opportunity to engage in these items and bring up ideas and initiatives not on the agenda. He added the City Council and community are

provided opportunities to engage throughout the year through the budget hearing process, the regular Council meetings, citizen surveys, and initiatives such as the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, where the community is engaged as well. Mr. Vanderpool advised that all of the City's directors are present today, and the meeting is televised live. He encouraged residents who are not present but watching the meeting to email him or any of the Council members or call at (586) 446-CITY to share their thoughts, feedback, and questions.

6. STRATEGIC PLANNING PRESENTATION

A. With a focus on 2040...evolving, improving and resiliency

Mr. Vanderpool stated it is hard to believe that the City has been into the Visioning 2030 for a number of years, and that has paid some unbelievable dividends for the City. He stressed that visioning is so important, and the 2030 Visioning plan was centered on quality-of-life amenities, community growth, stability, core services, and technology. He reviewed the 2030 Visioning Statement and the set of Guiding Principles and explained that everything they have been doing over the last six or seven years since this plan was developed has been centered on this statement. He cited an example on one of the principles, "well-maintained and aesthetically-pleasing roads and green spaces," and pointed out when a road is being done, it is not just paved over, but they look at the entire roadway, including sidewalks, landscaping, trees, traffic signalization, etc. They will be talking about how they transition to the next phase and go from Visioning 2030 to Visioning 2040.

B. Visioning 2040...refining and improving the Sterling Heights strategic plan

i. Visioning 2030...a look back, accomplishments, a look to the future

Mr. Vanderpool stated before they go into creating Visioning 2040, they need to look at how they are doing with their seven guiding principles on Visioning 2030. He invited Assistant City Manager Jeff Bahorski to lead this discussion, adding that Mr. Bahorski, along with all of the City's directors and their Visioning team, is instrumental and very involved leading the way through establishing their 2030 plan.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Bahorski quoted Sir Winston Churchill, "However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results." He felt Visioning 2030 has produced outstanding results, noting that Sterling Heights is well on its way to becoming a vibrant, inclusive community for residents and businesses that is safe, active, progressive, and distinctive. He led an examination of the seven guiding principles to see how the City has done in turning the vision into a reality over the past several years. He provided a "report card" overview of each of the guiding principles and a grade on each one, explaining the reason for each particular grade and citing examples that backed up the grade. The grades for each of the guiding principles were A's and A+'s, with a B given on Guiding Principle 4, which is "Focal points that are both public and private to serve as destinations for residents and visitors". Mr. Bahorski felt this principle is a little more challenging since the private sector has a role to play, and while the City has done well with the Clinton River and Dodge Park to

draw residents and visitors, there is more work to be done. He pointed out the redevelopment of Lakeside Mall has the potential to be a significant focal point and regional magnet for the City, but the process is complicated and will be long-term, although they are making progress. He noted a grade of B+ on Guiding Principle 7, which is "Destination for high-tech and emerging industries and entrepreneurs". He noted this is an area where the City can create an environment for success, but there are many market factors that will determine the success or failure. He stressed the City has a lot of economic development successes, shown by the incredibly low vacancy rate, and he noted that a presentation will be given later this morning by April Boyle, Senior Advisor for Entrepreneurship, and Innovation at Velocity, outlining the process for a new strategic plan with a renewed focus on entrepreneurial services.

Mr. Bahorski felt these are overall good grades, although it is subjective, and some grades may be slightly higher and others slightly lower. He explained why it is important to move on to Visioning 2040 and "not just stay the course". They need to navigate the threats and be prepared, with the local examples of the Great Recession and the more recent pandemic. He talked about opportunity, and he commended each person at the table for playing a role in transforming Sterling Heights over the past six years from a city that used to promote itself as a cheap place to live, into a city that has recently been voted a best place for millennials. It is a City with award-winning parks and recreational opportunities and programs, and a community that is a destination for many seeking a

welcoming place to call “home.” He concluded with a quote from author Peter Kageyama, in his book, *For the Love of Cities*:

“...no one ever fell in love with a city because they fixed the potholes. We fall in love with a place because of some emotional connection; often a small and seemingly insignificant thing that makes us smile, that speaks to our hearts and appeals to our higher nature.”

Mr. Vanderpool explained the reason they went through the report card process is they want everyone to know Administration and Council go through these planning processes and implement the plans. He assured they are not going to get Visioning 2040 done this morning, but the purpose of these discussions is to start thinking about it, adding it will take the next year to look at it and bring back something meaningful.

ii. Introduction

Mr. Vanderpool stated he is pleased to introduce Ms. Becky Davenport, the facilitator for Strategiz and one of the founding members. He provided some background of Strategiz, adding they have supported Metro Detroit organizations over the past nine years, and he also provided some brief information on Ms. Davenport’s credentials and achievements.

Ms. Becky Davenport, of Strategiz, stated she is pleased to be here, and she provided a brief background of her history with Strategiz and strategic planning. She indicated she has done a lot of work with downtown Detroit partnership, and she cited specific projects on which she worked.

iii. Creating Visioning 2040...The Strategic Vision and Plan for Sterling Heights’ future

Ms. Davenport emphasized it is so important for a city to have a vision, and without a plan or roadmap, it is unlikely they will ever reach their goals. The world is always changing, so the target is moveable and unpredictable, but having a strategic plan and vision ensures the focus is there and they can stay the course. She admitted visioning is probably the most difficult part of strategic planning, but it can be the most rewarding as well.

Ms. Davenport reviewed some population demographics of Sterling Heights provided by SEMCOG, broken down by age groups, and she pointed out that the overall population in Sterling Heights is anticipated to rise by 2.4 percent by 2040. While it is anticipated that population for most age groups in Sterling Heights will decrease by 2040, the group between the ages of 65 to 84 is anticipated to go up 10 percent, and the age group of 85 and up is anticipated to rise by 150 percent. She noted that Sterling Heights is the fourth largest city in the State of Michigan, and that is a good position to be, especially in the Metro Detroit area. She encouraged them to think of their role as a leader and be a part of what Southeastern Michigan looks like. They also need to look at trends such as people eating out more at restaurants, shopping more online than in brick-and-mortar stores, and what that will mean for the City in 2040.

Ms. Davenport talked about eight key urban trends for consideration as they move toward the future: The 15-minute city; Green Public Spaces; Smart Health Communities; Inclusive Services and Planning; Innovation Driven Ecosystem; Hyper-Local Economy; Sustainable Buildings & Infrastructure; and Automated City Operations and Data-Driven Planning. She explained each of these, citing

examples and their benefits in a community. She provided the example of how important green space along the lakefront was to her when living in Downtown Chicago, and how it contributed to the quality of life for residents living in high-rise buildings in the city. She talked about the importance of healthy lifestyles and ways cities can take part in that.

Ms. Davenport led the group in an audience interaction polling exercise (www.slido.com) where she asked each person to rate these eight urban trends in order from what they felt was most important to least important. She reviewed the results, noting that as a group, the number one trend was Green Public Spaces, followed by 15 Minute City, Inclusive Services and Planning, Sustainable Buildings and Infrastructure, Automated City Operations and Data-Driven Planning, with Smart Health Communities and Innovation Driven Ecosystem tying for seventh place.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski stated she was a little surprised at the results, noting that although Green Public Spaces are important and are highly valued, she felt the number one trend would be Smart Health Communities since she is a nurse.

iv. The Visioning 2040 Process...Designing the Road Map using SWOT analysis

Ms. Davenport talked about the framework for strategic planning and how it works. She noted at the top, they have the Big Hairy Audacious Goals (BHAGs), which is their vision statement, or long-term goals, which drive the plan. The next step is the Strategic Initiatives, which helps them achieve the long-term goals, and Specific Measurable Attainable Realistic Time-bound (SMART) Goals,

which are looked at every year and serve as a building block. She explained that all of these provide the framework for them to assess their long-term progress and success, and the organization's mission, vision, and core values are what hold up this process.

Ms. Davenport led a group exercise in a "SWOT" analysis, which stands for Strengths, Weaknesses (or Challenges), Opportunities, and Threats. The following is a summary of the input provided for each of these categories:

Strengths: dedicated team; collaboration; leadership on all levels, innovation; dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); fiscal responsibility; continuous improvement and achievement; forward-thinking; engages residents; provides excellent customer service; strong employee retention; the City's position regionally with industrial and commercial developments; number and quality of amenities.

Challenges: diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); engaging residents; standing on our own rather than "just another suburb of Detroit"; demographics and keeping young people in the City; need to attract workers; changing economy in a "built-out" community; redevelopment and doing it correctly; number of different languages spoken by residents in the City; keeping the strengths as strengths, making sure they have the right organizational resources; recruitment of public safety personnel; regional infrastructure, with an aging infrastructure; aging housing stock, with people looking for newer, larger homes; lack of non-motorized transportation options.

Opportunities: transform North Van Dyke area and the northeast quadrant, specifically Lakeside Mall area; transform all of the commercial corridors; encourage the young people who are coming in and surprised at all the amenities offered to be ambassadors to bring in more young people; collaboration with regional resources; property values are very strong in manufacturing, commercial, and residential; many of the homes are older, smaller homes, which provide affordable housing stock; amenities for aging population, and making sure they are easily accessible; cultural diversity.

Threats: complacency; threat of unknown (i.e., Covid pandemic); economy and inflation, which are beyond the control of the City; changing job market; attracting new employees; lack of cooperation at

all levels of government, and a divided country; current tax structure may not generate enough money for the City; morale of citizens and employees, noting employees are happy now but City prides itself on "doing more with less"; have to be careful they do not "do less with less"; competition among communities; people working remotely means they do not have to live near work; changeover of leadership can change the vision of the City.

Ms. Davenport led another Slido exercise, asking each participant to write up to five words representing what they feel success will look like for Sterling Heights in 2040. Upon completion of the exercise, the words that came up the most were "inclusive," "safe," "innovative," "vibrant," and "affordable." She indicated that concludes her presentation, and she thanked the City for the opportunity to speak.

v. The Timeline

Mr. Vanderpool thanked Ms. Davenport for her presentation. He indicated that this is a process they will be going through in the next year with the community, but he anticipated their input will be a reflection of what they did this morning and he did not feel there will be much deviation. He assured they are not throwing their Visioning 2030 plan out, but they are trying to build on that for the Visioning 2040 plan.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski opened the floor for comments or questions from the audience and those in attendance, but no one spoke.

The meeting recessed at 9:51 and reconvened at 10:05 a.m.

C. Entrepreneurial services...a revitalized focus for Velocity

Mr. Vanderpool stated this section focuses on entrepreneurial efforts in the City, primarily focused on the Velocity Collaboration Center. He explained they

established the Velocity Collaboration Center in 2008, with the idea to foster an economic system to help small businesses and start-up businesses to grow and hopefully expand. He acknowledged sometimes these economic initiatives do not follow municipal boundaries, but they want to do whatever they can in Sterling Heights to foster growth. He stressed the manufacturing and commercial economic environment in Sterling Heights is very strong. He invited Senior Economic Development Advisor Luke Bonner to talk about some new initiatives.

Senior Economic Development Advisor Luke Bonner talked about the Velocity Center, and he provided a history of that center, which started in 2008 when the State legislature provided for the creation of SmartZones, designed to create clusters of technology, business, research, and industrial development throughout the state, and they are intended to create partnerships between municipalities, universities, and business by creating an environment of cooperation and innovation. They closed out their final reports to the Federal and Economic Development Administration, the agency that granted \$411,000 to the City to make the revisions to the former Ford UAW daycare facility for this purpose. In that final report from Oakland University, they indicated that between 2010 and 2020, the Incubator Program SmartZone at Velocity was responsible for creating 280 jobs.

Mr. Bonner explained the program is focused on technology manufacturing. He outlined the five areas that are benefited from entrepreneurship and business incubation in economic development, including the following: accelerates

economic growth; promotes innovation; can impact social change; promotes research and industrial development; and develops and improves existing businesses.

Mr. Bonner explained that in 2021 and continuing into this year, they have embarked on a marketing initiative for the City's industrial corridor, which is located from 14 Mile Road north to the City's southern border and encompasses the area between Van Dyke Avenue and Mound Road. He stated there are nearly 60,000 jobs in this corridor, and almost 30 million square feet of industrial and high-tech space with low vacancy, low unemployment, and the economic impact of the companies in this area includes approximately \$30 billion of import and export activity in these six square miles alone. He added that signage was installed a few years ago reflecting a high-tech theme as the "Sterling Innovation District" that delineates this area from the rest of the City. They are creating a narrative and brand identity, and he showed slides depicting the new brand identity logo, emphasizing the Velocity Center is a major catalyst of economic development activity in the Sterling Innovation District. Mr. Bonner provided some information on the improvements that have been made, as well as new ideas and opportunities for the Velocity Center and the City's entrepreneurship program in partnership with the Michigan Economic Development under the State's SmartZone program. He talked about the renovation and opening of The Element, a co-working space that was formerly the commercial kitchen. The Element provides many great flexible, low-cost, and temporary options for entrepreneurs and single business owners and is a

great place to network with others. A new tenant and partner to the City, the Macomb Robotics Collaboration Center (nka Macomb Automotive Robotics Zone, or MARZ) has also moved in. They are a non-profit organization dedicated to STEM programming for K-12 partners, as well as industry partners, to help build the talent and workforce of the future.

Mr. Bonner welcomed Ms. April Boyle, recently contracted with the Local Development Finance Authority as the Senior Advisor for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. He provided some of her background in the City of Detroit.

Ms. April Boyle stated she has been involved in innovation and entrepreneurship for over ten years and is founder and former Executive Director of Build Institute and D:hive, an award-winning and nationally-recognized incubator accelerator and entrepreneurship center in Detroit and other communities. She explained through her work, she would be focused on building an entrepreneurial ecosystem in Sterling Heights and throughout Macomb County, with the hub being the Velocity Center. She stressed this is critical, and their public image is also important to let people know this is available through news, media, and education. They would be developing and investing in individuals and companies, which includes training, mentorship, coaches, offering technical assistance, and more. Ms. Boyle outlined this is important because it creates jobs, improves productivity and quality of life by retaining and attracting talent, and spurs innovation, enabling solutions to pressing challenges, such as climate change, poverty, and health issues with an aging population.

Ms. Boyle noted the City has a unique opportunity in this region, noting that southeast Michigan is an emerging ecosystem by Venture Capital Valuation, and this region has produced five unicorns in the last five years. She clarified that a "unicorn" is a company worth over \$1 billion. Another opportunity is sector disruption because of Covid 19 and other factors such as advances in technology. She noted there will be historic public, private, and philanthropic investment in entrepreneurship and innovation, and it is important to be ready to take advantage of that opportunity. She explained there is a team of local partners, and they will be updating their vision, mission, and core values for the Velocity Center, doing a SWOT analysis, zeroing in on their target market, producing an executive summary, and understanding programming, and the budgeting and staff for that execution. They will be producing interviews and getting feedback from the community and entrepreneurs, stressing that this is a team effort. They will be updating their brand and website and will focus on data, analytics, and storytelling. They need to understand their strategic initiatives and goals. She explained it is important to have a public resource guide so the businesses and core organizations are collaborating and communicating, and it a transparent, easy-to-use process for entrepreneurs to navigate. It will help them to be efficient in using their resources.

Ms. Boyle explained that she has only been in this position for about six weeks, so she is still listening and learning. She provided her email information and added she would love to meet with everyone to discuss their ideas about

making Sterling Heights a place for entrepreneurship, small business, and high-tech business growth as well.

Mr. Vanderpool stated the City is fortunate to have Ms. Boyle on board with them. He commended City Council and the entire leadership team, noting that they spend a lot of time focusing on their major corporate players in the City, including Stellantis and Ford. He cited the example of when the former Chrysler plant was scheduled to close, and the City Council established a broad base and task force, including representatives from the Governor's office and others, and it is the only example in the country of where Chrysler bought back a plant out of bankruptcy because of the City's efforts. He added these large corporations are a huge part of the City's tax base, and is also why property taxes, especially for residential properties, are so low. He stressed it is also extremely important to focus on the small businesses and start-up companies that make up the vast majority of employment, estimated to be about 70 percent in terms of economic impact to their economy. He is glad they have the Velocity Center, and he thanked the Mayor and City Council for their leadership in this area, because it is paying dividends and they are headed in the right direction.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski noted there are no residents present to make comments, and she opened the floor to comments from Council members.

Councilman Yanez questioned how much the City is spending each year to run Velocity.

Mr. Vanderpool deferred that question to Mr. Bonner. He noted there are a number of components, with SmartZone being one of them. There is also the Velocity Collaboration Center.

Councilman Yanez clarified he would like to know how much it costs the taxpayers to fund Velocity.

Mr. Bonner replied that their budget is historically comprised of managing and maintaining the actual building, including the required staff to do so. He estimated that is about \$450,000 annually to run and staff the Velocity Center from a facility standpoint. He estimated it is an additional \$450,000 annually for programming, which includes experts available for providing assistance in start-ups.

Councilman Yanez noted the report indicated the Velocity Center created 280 jobs over a ten-year period, broken down to an average of 28 jobs a year. He questions how many of those businesses were retained in Sterling Heights.

Mr. Bonner replied he does not know that number but he can find out.

Councilman Yanez questioned whether they are lagging when they talk about only 280 jobs over a ten-year period. He questioned whether the Velocity Center should be creating more jobs and businesses in the future.

Ms. Boyle replied that she cannot speak to the history because she is still learning, but she noted that Velocity Center is a start-up, and eight to ten years is a fairly young firm in terms of business. She has not done a comparative analysis of 280 jobs over a ten-year period in comparison to the number of jobs created in other SmartZones, or even across the nation, so she does not know if

280 jobs are average, better, or worse than others. She felt that moving forward, they will be putting goals together, so part of the process is understanding the baseline at this point and watching to make sure there is growth.

Councilman Yanez questioned how they measure success, looking at it from a taxpayer's standpoint, that if they are spending \$900,000 a year, it should be generating more than \$900,000 of economic activity.

Ms. Boyle replied they, along with Council's input, will be putting together a list of what success looks like for this initiative, including the number of companies started, the number of jobs generated, number of events and news articles, etc. She stressed they want Sterling Heights to be innovative and a thought-leader, and in order for that to occur, entrepreneurship and innovation has to be part of it. She replied to further inquiry they would measure that and report back on a regular basis.

Councilwoman Ziarko questioned the economic impact of 280 jobs in the region.

Mr. Bonner replied he does not know but he can find out.

Councilwoman Schmidt noted that sometimes the success in Sterling Heights is also their curse because it is difficult to find space for growing companies to expand. She cited an example of an up-and-coming manufacturing company where her son works, noting they used to be located in Sterling Heights, but found they had to move to Madison Heights when there was unfortunately nothing available in Sterling Heights that would provide them the room they needed to expand. She commended that business owner for being innovative

and welcoming to his employees, citing some of the amenities he provides, including internships. She questioned how many of the businesses started up at the Incubator have been able to be retained in Sterling Heights and how many moved on simply because of lack of space in Sterling Heights.

Mr. Bonner clarified that 280 jobs is one metric that was pulled out of Oakland University, who was their service provider for ten years. He noted there were a lot of other data points included in the close-out report. There were also a number of programs the Michigan Economic Development Corporation made available to start-up companies and they would facilitate the access to those programs. Mr. Bonner stressed the culture of innovation, entrepreneurship and mentorship is just as important as the job creation, and they are connecting people together.

Councilman Radtke questioned whether there is more failure than success.

Ms. Boyle replied that the experts do say that many small businesses fail.

Councilman Radtke understood that if they take chances, they may fail a little more than they succeed. He noted Ms. Boyle came from the Build Institute and d:hive, but he felt Velocity is different because it is in the suburbs, no sidewalks in front so people have to drive to it, it is next to train tracks, and it is not in a downtown setting. He felt that would make Ms. Boyle's job a lot more difficult. He indicated his friend runs TechTown in Downtown Detroit, and it is an exciting place to be. He felt that, although the Velocity Center building was donated, it does not have amenities around it, so they need to think about how they are

creating an environment to attract young people. He added the ideal setting may not be in the middle of an industrial area.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski stated she loves the idea of entrepreneurship. She explained is a big proponent of buying Michigan-made items, and she recently bought a cup that had the outline of Michigan with about thirty cities on it, and although Sterling Heights is the fourth largest city in the State, it was not listed on that cup. She felt it is important for them to find an identity, possibly an "innovation center," and she challenged them to improve Velocity Center to make a name for themselves in the State of Michigan. She felt they are going in the right direction. She requested, if they are going forward with the program, that Ms. Boyle craft a framework of a formal City retention program. It would be multi-faceted and would involve her meeting with the private sector, but she would need to look at what they need to do to maintain opportunity and assist those new businesses with that opportunity.

Councilwoman Koski questioned how many businesses they have at Velocity, and how a start-up business makes contact. She asked whether there are any qualifications required to receive their services.

Ms. Boyle replied that the Velocity Center is ninety percent occupied at this point, although some of those businesses may not be in alignment with their vision and mission, which they are currently refreshing. They want to make sure new companies are forming and they have the opportunity to grow and move out. She added that some of the companies have been there for a while and it may be time for them to "emerge from the nest." She added they have a

beautiful co-working space, currently occupied by three tenants. One of their goals is to grow that use, with the hope to see ten to twenty people in that space. Ms. Boyle stated she has worked closely with TechTown over the years, and she appreciates their model. She agreed with Councilman Radtke that once they go through the strategic planning process, they may find the current location of the Velocity Center is not the place to be long-term. She addressed Councilwoman Koski's question that they are currently developing the qualifications that will be required for those interested in becoming part of the Velocity Center.

Councilman Yanez questioned whether they are considering anything along the lines of TEDx Talks.

Ms. Boyle replied affirmatively, explaining a fairly new book, *The Second-Act Entrepreneur*, is great at this particular time when people are leaving their corporate jobs and seeking to start up a small business that will leave a legacy in their later years. She stated she invited the author of that book in for a book talk and book giveaway, although she does not have a firm date at this point. She is inviting people to speak, but they do not want to duplicate efforts, so they want to coordinate with other SmartZones, as well as the Chamber of Commerce, Macomb County, and Macomb Community College.

D. Making a difference with every dollar...Budgeting the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 allocation

Mr. Vanderpool introduced Chief Financial Officer Jennifer Varney to lead the discussion and highlight some of the community feedback received.

Chief Financial Officer Jennifer Varney provided an update on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) 2021. She informed that Sterling Heights will receive \$19.8 million over two years, and they have already received the first half of that money, with receipt of the second half expected in May 2022. She advised these funds must be obligated by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026, so there is a long time to decide the best use of these funds. She explained there are four broad categories that are allowable uses, and she briefly reviewed each of them. She added they are prohibited from using any of these funds for pension contributions or to pay down debt, and they are not allowed to add it to their fund balance and let it remain there. She stressed the point of the Act is to spend the funds to get the money out into the economy and improve the community for the residents.

Ms. Varney explained that the third category is to provide government services to the extent of revenue lost. She stated that is the main category for which they would propose for the use of their funds, to the extent that it is the most flexible and they can show revenue losses through a very specific calculation as prescribed by the U.S. Department of Treasury. She explained that based on her calculations, as reviewed by Plante & Moran, they can use the entirety of their funding level as a revenue loss, mainly because they can factor in growth of four percent annually, prescribed by the federal government, or they can factor in their actual growth rate, which was more than 8.9 percent over the years preceding the pandemic.

Ms. Varney explained they received input from City staff, City Council, and they solicited feedback at two committee forums held in October. They had the proposed projects in the atrium for about a month, so the community could provide feedback from that, as well as from the City's website, where they received the most responses. She added that over seven hundred responses were received from residents. She showed slides that summarized the feedback received, and she explained it shows a list of the projects and the number of residents who were either "very" or "somewhat interested" in the project. She listed the top five overall projects, with the first being the Sterling Relief Drain Trail. She explained that, although ARPA funding would not qualify, she felt it is interesting to note that this is a highly-rated project that will be funded outside of these funds. The second of the top five projects is the Riverland Park Improvements, followed by the ITC Corridor Multi-Use Path, the Sidewalk Gap Program, and Neighborhood Street Trees program. Ms. Varney then showed a slide showing a list of the projects and the number of residents who voted them in their top five. The results were similar to the other list, with the first being the ITC Corridor Multi-Use Path, followed by the Riverland Park Improvements, Neighborhood Street Trees, Sidewalk Gap Program, and Speed Humps. She explained that a total of \$25 million in projects was proposed, and based on feedback received from all sources, City Administration is recommending that \$1.5 million in assistance to residents and businesses through direct assistance to small businesses and households, job training for unemployed workers, and premium pay for essential city workers be funded, noting that the Household

Assistance Program has already been approved by Council, implemented, and to date, they have issued household assistance payments to eighteen local households for a total of \$36,000. She invited Senior Economic Development Advisor Luke Bonner to provide information on the first of these projects, noting that he will be followed by City Planner/City Development Manager Chris McLeod, Assistant City Manager Jeff Bahorski, and Chief of Police Dale Dwojakowski.

Mr. Luke Bonner explained that in 2021, the Corridor Improvement Authority embarked on a new Strategic Plan for the North Van Dyke District to take advantage of the assets in the area, which is the Clinton River and the Dodge Park system. Through the assistance of a PowerPoint presentation, he pointed out where this area encompasses, and noted the perspective provided identifies a highly-active park with dining and entertainment options, thus mixing recreation and entertainment in this district. He reminded the dining and entertainment option would require a private operation; however, with the proper budget they feel is attainable through the use of ARPA funds, an anticipated congressional earmark, and the Corridor Improvement Authority budget, they will have the resources to pursue the public park activation portion of the project. He reviewed a couple of the Guiding Principles identified in the Strategic Master Plan, which specifies that redevelopment will include public spaces for gathering and activate the corridor as a place for people, providing connections to existing City assets, and it will be guided by the best practices in planning, urban design, sustainability, equity, placemaking, and economic

development. Mr. Bonner talked about some of the amenities of the Strategic Plan for this area, and they feel with the funding he outlined, they can start the process of creating this highly-anticipated park area.

City Planner/City Development Manager Chris McLeod explained the details of the ITC Corridor Multi-Use Path, which would provide the City with the opportunity to create a major link between the planned Iron Belle Trail, which is planned to extend throughout the entire length of the City, and the planned transformational redevelopment designated for Lakeside Mall. The ITC Corridor project would provide two miles of trail extending from Edison Court at the south end all the way to Schoenherr in the Lakeside area, and would be a paved, 10-foot-wide path providing ample room for runners, walkers, bicyclists, and others. The City has been engaging ITC regarding potential joint use of the corridor, as well as HRC, the City's engineering consultants, to review title work and other easements associated with this potential project. He added the project fits perfectly within the City's Visioning 2030 plan and the Parks and Recreation Non-Motorized Plan. He noted this was one of the highest-rated projects from the online feedback of 700 respondents.

Mr. McLeod provided information on the Sidewalk Gap Program, pointing out the City has been working diligently for a number of years to fill sidewalk gaps, and that is a major component of the City's Visioning 2030 plan. This proposed funding allocation would help supplement the existing program and could provide 1.5 miles of sidewalk gap completion throughout the City, as well as

providing funding necessary for easement acquisition in those areas where easement acquisition has been a hindrance in the past.

Mr. McLeod provided information on the Neighborhood Street Tree program, pointing out the City has made a major commitment over the last six years to increase the City's overall tree canopy. The City is proposing to further fund these efforts with a portion of the ARPA funds that would allow the planting of approximately 2,000 trees and could provide funding to complete the City's existing Tree Inventory that was started in 2021 and could complete it for the entire City. The Tree Inventory would provide a complete assessment of every tree within road rights-of-way for the entire City, including size, condition, and proposed maintenance needs. This inventory could help assess where plantings should be prioritized, and with the remaining money, there could be up to six miles of local streets planted for full tree canopy.

Mr. McLeod outlined the proposed Plumbrook Road Resurfacing project, noting that one of the most important priorities for amenities is city streets, and he noted that the 2.5-mile stretch of Plumbrook Road, between Utica Road and Van Dyke Avenue, carries over 10,000 vehicles on a daily basis, which is a very high amount of traffic for a road of its size. It provides a significant transportation route for a number of rooftops in the City, as well as schools, commercial centers, places of worship, etc. He noted that Plumbrook currently has a PASER rating of 3, which is considered a "poor" designation, and puts it in line for the replacement proposed for this funding. He noted the proposed improvements would bring Plumbrook in line with other road improvements the City has done,

including Van Dyke, Dodge Park, M-59/Hall Road, and Mound Road, which is forthcoming. He outlined the improvements, which would include a new paved surface, value-added engineering of the road base, sidewalk gap and replacement, new crosswalks, extensive landscaping, and new traffic signals.

Assistant City Manager Jeff Bahorski stated the three projects he will be outlining all align with the City's Visioning 2030 plan and have the potential to profoundly impact the City for generations at a minimal investment. He talked about the development of a Micro Forest that would serve as a model for the rest of reforestation of Sterling Heights, not by replacing one tree at a time, but one forest at a time. He explained it is possible to grow a forest in an area with no trees that would end up so thick and lush it would be difficult to walk through, with these results possible within ten years. He cited other countries and areas of the United States where this type of project has been successfully accomplished. He reviewed the benefits of forests, including cleaner air, a natural water filtration system, natural air conditioner, flood mitigation, a natural habitat for all forms of life, and a natural recreational amenity for those seeking peace and quiet. It is self-sustaining in just three years and requires no further cultivation, and in ten years, a natural asset will be restored that will pay huge dividends for generations to come. He noted if this is approved, the City will start site selection for the City's first micro forest, and they hope to make this a community effort by seeking groups and individuals interested in volunteering their time and talent to this project.

Mr. Bahorski reviewed the details for another proposed project, being a Community Garden. He provided a list of the benefits associated with a community garden, including improving air quality and water infiltration, increases access to fresh foods, increases physical activity through garden maintenance, among other benefits. This project could be considered a part of establishing a sustainable Sterling Heights.

Mr. Bahorski concluded his presentation by talking about retention ponds, noting the City has been upgrading its inventory of smaller neighborhood retention ponds across the city with new safety fencing and other enhancements, but this has had limited funding available. The City has done a good job on keeping the grass cut and removing litter, these areas are plagued by bank erosion, invasive nuisance plant species, and large debris deposits. If approved for ARPA funding, the City can undertake a comprehensive plan to rehabilitate the regional retention ponds, which are generally adjacent to parks, neighborhoods, and major roads, and in some cases are used for recreational purposes. He stressed the ability to make these look and function better merits serious consideration for ARPA funding.

Chief of Police Dale Dwojakowski explained that, through the Citizen Survey, as well as complaints received from residents and City Council members, they are aware speeding and reckless driving in residential areas remains a top concern with residents and the Police Department. He explained his department recently met with Fire, DPW, Engineering, and City Management have discussed possible traffic-calming solutions. He noted speed humps have been recently

installed in several local communities, including Detroit, Ferndale, and Southfield. He explained the difference between a speed hump, or speed cushion, and a speed bump, noting the former gradually elevates from ground level to about 3 inches in height and back to ground level over a course of six or seven feet, so it is gradual. They are not as jarring as speed bumps and, with the 72-inch width, they allow for fire trucks and ambulances, which each have wheel widths of 75 inches, to drive over them. Cars and trucks typically have interior wheel widths of 62 to 68 inches. He explained a pilot project is being proposed, and streets are being identified for possible installation, based on a list of qualifying factors, including residential streets with documented accidents, cut-through streets, streets adjacent to schools, streets with a documented average of eighty-fifth percentile speeds exceeding 35 miles per hour, or 30 miles per hour for streets next to schools or parks. He clarified the "eighty-fifth percentile" means eighty-five percent of the cars are travelling at that speed or below. He also noted qualifying factors include the number of complaints they receive for a certain street, proximity to a city park, and residential support in a particular area. Any street approved for this pilot program would have a baseline speed study done, and a secondary speed study done after the speed hump installation to gauge the effectiveness. He noted that speed humps are part of an overall plan to address residential speeding complaints, placement of their four digital speed signs, use of their covert traffic data collector, targeted traffic and patrol enforcement, and their new five-unit directed patrol unit which will be starting up this spring.

Ms. Varney summarized the proposed projects just reviewed total \$12,250.00, with \$1.5 million in household and small business assistance, and \$300,000 to fund part-time Code and Fire Inspectors for a preliminary measure while City Administration and Fire Administration is working on a long-term plan. She advised there is talk of the region, with multiple cities and/or county putting a project together to fund a regional project, so although nothing specific has been established, they are proposing to reserve about \$2 million for a potential regional-wide project. They also wanted to reserve about \$1 million for other capital improvements that may come up over the next two years. They would like to reserve about \$1.5 million for water and sewer infrastructure, and a little more than \$1 million for contingency projects that may cost more than anticipated. She informed all of this together is the total allocation of \$19.8 million. She stated that, on behalf of City Administration, she is pleased to present this proposed plan for discussion and input.

Mr. Vanderpool stated they are looking to City Council for feedback and direction for how to best proceed with this list. He reminded they have some time to spend the money, so it is not critical to make a decision today, but they would like to start the process. He acknowledged it will take a couple of years to get through this list and spend \$19.8 million, adding they look forward to Council's feedback.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski opened the floor for public comment, noting there are some people in the audience at this point.

- Ben Orjada – questioned why some of the recommended projects were actually ranked lower on the citizen survey; cited the Retention Basins ranked 13 out of 16, and Plumbrook Road ranked 14 out of 16; pointed out there is so much development on the north side of the City, which he admitted looks great; concerned about comparative lack of investment in parks, trails, etc. on the south side; would love to see City acquire the vacant Fillmore Elementary to utilize it for space and activities.
- Brandy Wright – stated she lives in north part of the City, but has friends in the south portion who often look to neighboring communities for activities and recreational opportunities; felt investing in the south end to avoid the risk of those residents moving out of the City; loves the Community Garden idea, noting she had a huge garden in her yard, and shared the pumpkin patch with the kids in her neighborhood.

Councilwoman Ziarko liked the idea of Fillmore Elementary area for a pocket park and possibly a community garden, and she could see where the residents in that area would benefit from some improvements. She reminded it is not only up to the City, but it would have to be negotiated with the Warren Consolidated School District to see whether they are interested in selling to the City or selling to a developer. She questioned whether there is a chance that a portion of the repair of Plumbrook Road could be taken out of Safe Streets since it is considered in poor condition, and the remainder could be taken from the ARPA funds.

Mr. Vanderpool replied the challenge is that Safe Streets funding is fully allocated to local roads, so to take a portion of the Plumbrook project from Safe Streets would compromise their five-year plan with respect to the local roads outlined in that plan. It could be done, but other priority roads would have to be sacrificed. He explained they have other thoughts and ideas about Fillmore, but they would like to hear from Council.

Councilwoman Ziarko stated they would like to spend the money in certain areas, but it also involves working with the ITC Corridor and utilities, so some of these projects involve bringing someone else in to accomplish them. She questioned how that will affect their timeline and their deadline for the expenditure of the funds. She is in favor of planting trees, but she pointed out it is a challenge on where to put the trees, noting there are some residents who do not want trees in their yard because of the upkeep. She felt this is a good starting point, and improvement to the retention ponds is needed throughout the City. She stated she has been on speed humps in Detroit so she understands the concept. She felt there will be people who will still speed, regardless of the speed humps, so she would like to research that more. She stressed they cannot be put at the end of anyone's driveway, so placement becomes an issue. She commented on the comment that the Velocity Center might not be in the right place, and she questioned whether the North Van Dyke area would possibly be a better location for it.

Councilman Radtke agreed with Councilwoman Ziarko on some of her comments. He also agreed with some of the residents who commented that much of the development is geared to the north end of the City, and he has heard from many other residents who feel the same way. He appreciated the proposed Riverland Park Improvements, adding he is a strong proponent for park improvements; however, he recalled a few weeks ago Willow Woods Elementary and Fillmore Elementary. He would like to spend money in the north end, including parks, but he felt they have to spend money where people live

now, not where they might live in the future. He felt a lot of the proposals for use of the ARPA funding are occurring in areas where people do not live. Councilman Radtke agreed with Mr. Orjada's comments about the choice of projects, citing the example of the Plumbrook Road project, which did not score as high with the residents as other projects that scored a lot higher, plus the Plumbrook project is much more expensive. He felt these priorities are important, but he questioned how they were selected. He could not see where they should have any trouble planting trees on public property, even the street trees between the sidewalk and the street, because that area is owned by the City. He felt trees in neighborhoods slows speeders and narrows the vision field of drivers so they slow down. He expressed opposition to speed humps, pointing out they are proposing \$500,000 on mechanical improvements, but if they could plant more trees in the neighborhoods, they would achieve the same result. He pointed out Sterling Heights intentionally does not have streetlights in neighborhoods, so he questioned whether they will have to add infrastructure and lights if they opt for speed humps in neighborhoods. He questioned the City's liability if they are not lit and someone hits one of the humps. He noted when he is in Detroit and drives over speed bumps, they are loud, and he would not want to live in a house near one of these speed humps, adding he felt it will negatively impact the quality of life in neighborhoods. He expressed concern that this will slow down emergency vehicles, and even though the wheelbase of the emergency vehicles is wider, he felt they will still be careful and slow down as they approach. He stressed Sterling Heights is proud of their emergency

response times, and he felt this will negatively impact that. He agreed that Plumbrook needs to be fixed, but city traffic will benefit from Plumbrook; however, he would prefer to see the funding spent on projects that will benefit the residents of Sterling Heights.

Councilman Yanez stated he lives on Plumbrook and stressed it definitely needs to be replaced and is long overdue, adding that it is horrible on the school busses that have to travel that two-mile road. He commented this does not affect the people driving through Sterling Heights, but it is Sterling Heights residents who use that road every day. He reminded that this money is not a "gift," but it is their tax dollars that deserve to be brought back. He noted the projects all include the cost of the initial project, but he questioned the cost to maintain all of these projects over the years. He pointed out the recently-approved trail at Freedom Hill will cost \$17,000 per year for grass-cutting and that is for a one-half mile section. While he felt the trail along the ITC Corridor is a great idea, he questioned what it will cost to maintain. He felt the job-training is a great idea, but he questioned what that will look like and how the City will be involved. He pointed out they like to attract people to Sterling Heights, but he questioned whether they are sure they are spurring economic activity for local businesses, or whether this benefits a majority who do not live in Sterling Heights. He questioned whether they are proposing to have signage to direct people to local businesses, and he further questioned whether the people they bring into Sterling Heights through this economic activity are moving here and shopping/dining here. Councilman Yanez stressed he is a huge fan of

community gardens, which is a project that is difficult to measure the return in dollars because the benefit and impact goes beyond a dollar figure. He provided his reasons he is in favor of the community gardens, adding they involve all age groups working together. He felt it is important to reduce the carbon footprint, so he is in favor of the creation of a Micro Forest. He agreed with Councilman Radtke about the speed humps. He felt they will need to rely more on technology for speed control in the future. He questioned the \$2 million proposed for "regional projects" and felt they need to spend this money to benefit the residents of Sterling Heights. He cited there is a PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) program that Sterling Heights has for businesses, and he suggested they could set up a revolving fund for a similar program for residential homes. He pointed out there are a lot of older homes that are not energy efficient, and a revolving fund could help residents with energy efficient improvements, which would benefit residents who have invested in this City for decades and would also keep the neighborhoods nicer.

Councilwoman Schmidt questioned whether any of the money for "Water and Sewer Infrastructure" could be used toward the new water meter installations in order to relieve some of the General Fund expenditures for that project.

Ms. Varney replied that use of funds would be allowed; however, they are bonding for that project, and the plan is to borrow \$12 million. If they were to use this, they would bond for \$10.5 million, but that might only save the average resident \$1 a month. She felt possibly that money could be used on a project that would be more impactful to residents.

Councilwoman Schmidt questioned the allocation for "Regional Projects," and, because of the timeframe they are held to with the expenditure of these funds, at what point that money could be spent on something else if there are no regional projects.

Mr. Vanderpool clarified that the intent for the "Regional Projects" allocation is not to spend it outside of Sterling Heights proper, but it could be used to leverage additional funding from the county, state, federal government, or other granting agencies. He noted Councilman Yanez brought up a very good point about the PACE program, which is a good program and should be available to residents. He suggested they could possibly customize that for something for Sterling Heights residents and leverage some grant funding. He explained the idea is to turn the \$2 million into possibly \$6 million from outside funding sources, but it would be allocated for Sterling Heights businesses and residents only. He clarified that is the intent of the "Regional projects."

Councilwoman Schmidt stated Plumbrook is in horrible condition, and she felt enough Sterling Heights residents and public service vehicles utilize that road, so she did not have an issue with the Plumbrook Road project. She questioned whether some of the money for "Sidewalk Gaps" could be used to alleviate the situation at the Mound/ 18-1/2 Mile intersection by installing a pedestrian bridge, although she does not know the cost. She stated she loves the idea of a community garden or park at Fillmore, but she felt they need to be cautious about purchasing a building because there are legacy costs involved to maintain the building and fill it with personnel. She liked the ideas of the community

garden and the ITC Trail, which would both be great enhancements to the community.

Councilwoman Koski questioned whether the feedback of seven hundred resident responses was on their proposals or the proposals that were projected.

Mr. Vanderpool replied the residents were given the same information that was provided at the Town Hall, so they provided their feedback on what had been listed. He also believed there were some open-ended responses, and he replied to further inquiry they would be happy to share those open-ended responses.

Councilwoman Koski stated she would like to see some of their ideas. She mentioned some skilled trade training for high school students at Utica Community Schools. She would like to see City Administration talk to them to find out if a partnership would be possible for seniors who do not want to go to college but need a skilled trade. She commended the Sustainability Commission for coming up with some great ideas. She indicated she would like to see Kleino and Edison Court connected with a walking path so they "continue the loop." She questioned whether some of the Sidewalk Gap funding could be used to set a limit on what a resident would pay so they could get their gaps completed quicker. She felt they should investigate the purchase of Fillmore Elementary, acknowledging that the south end of the City needs more activity, and she questioned whether the purchase of this school would fill that need. She suggested if it is not feasible, possibly there is something else that could provide them with activity. She agreed that Plumbrook needs help and questioned whether any Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding could be

used for a portion of that repair. She does not care for the idea of speed humps, especially for someone who is not familiar with the area and hits it at nighttime, causing them to lose control of their car. She added she would like more information before she makes a decision on speed humps. Councilwoman Koski referred to the SEMCOG population projections for 2045, and the projected 150 percent increase in the elderly population. She felt they need to start thinking about how they will provide for this increase, and she questioned whether they could think about ways to help these seniors so they can stay in their homes. She recalled at one time, they offered interest-free loans for home improvements that did not have to be paid off until the property was sold. She suggested they can possibly get them some type of assistance in maintaining their homes, such as snowplowing and grass-cutting. She also suggested activities for their seniors, although she did not know whether any of that money could be used for this assistance.

Councilwoman Ziarko appreciated the presentations on how to spend this money, and she commented that there are over one hundred cities and townships across the State of Michigan that turn their money down, not because they do not want it, but they have no one to facilitate the process. She felt they can have some of the money in reserve right now, but they need to have a "Plan B" in the event they do not find a use for the "Regional Projects," so they can move forward to spend the money, possibly on one of the projects they have not talked about. She questioned with all of the talk about non-motorized plans in place by 2045, whether they will need golf carts to get around.

Councilman Radtke stated he does not have much faith in regional projects, especially working with the County. He does not feel the Plumbrook Road should be considered because that money should benefit all of the residents. He agreed with Councilwoman Koski that he would like to see the ideas, comments, and questions shared by the 700 residents for the open-ended questions on the survey. Councilman Radtke commented that not all of the bus stops in Sterling Heights are handicap-accessible, and he felt they should be improved to make the community accessible for everyone, not just the able-bodied. He talked about a shared-use path on the east side of Dodge Park, between 15 Mile and 16 Mile Road, which is only 5 feet in width. He talked with a resident who frequently drives her legal cart around the neighborhood but has trouble with bikes because they are traveling that sidewalk on bikes, going up to the shared use path on 16 Mile Road. The ten-foot-wide pathways are not a problem, but the sidewalks in her neighborhood are too narrow. He felt it is important if they are going to connect to the Iron Belle Trail that they widen these pathways. He felt there needs to be better engineering for their roadways, pointing out that areas with little curves in the road tend to slow people down, without having to mechanically intervene with speed humps. He liked the idea of a pocket park or community garden, but he has spoken to the Superintendent of Warren Consolidated Schools, and it seems they want to sell the land and building together. He claimed the Superintendent indicated to him that they want to move forward, so he felt if the City is interested, they should not put it off. He

expressed concern that a developer will purchase that property for apartments or houses.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski questioned why some projects were chosen over other projects. She agreed with Councilwoman Schmidt about the sidewalk gap at 18-1/2 Mile and Mound, possibly with a safe bridge and/or signage. She added she is not necessarily in favor of a crosswalk only because it does not assure that cars will stop for pedestrians. Increasing parks in the southern end of the City is important to her and may help to raise the values in bring people into that area or keep the current residents there. She would like to pursue the option of Fillmore Elementary School, adding it is a good starting point. She stated she is not a big fan of a reserve for regional projects because it may not materialize. She felt Sterling Heights always seems to be biggest "footer of the bill." If they decide to go with this reserve for Regional Projects, she would like to see a very strict timeline so they have time to pick another project. Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski pointed out that there are very few areas in the City that still have dense tree growth, and the majority of the time those parcels are sold to developers. She recommended looking into some of the parcels that are already heavily-treed, and they can see if the City can buy them before they start with creating a whole new forest. She agreed with Councilman Radtke that speed humps will slow emergency vehicles down, and she stressed that seconds do matter in emergency situations. She loves the idea of increasing the tree canopy on streets where they are experiencing speeding, because trees slow traffic down. She felt they need to improve education for the unemployed, and the

skilled trades is a great option, suggesting Velocity might be a good option. She would also like to see partnering with the schools and Velocity to improve skilled trade access, and possibly some small skilled trade businesses could get started. She is in favor of seeing what the senior community wants, especially as SEMCOG predicts the population of that age group is going to greatly increase. She stated she would like to see seniors be able to continue to live in this community.

Councilman Yanez questioned when they talk about having to spend the money, whether that means "allocated" or actually spent.

Ms. Varney replied that by the end of 2024, the money has to be allocated and encumbered, so they would have to have signed contracts and the projects would have to be started. She added that the dollars would have to be spent out the door by December 2026.

Mr. Vanderpool commended Council on raising some very good ideas and providing good feedback. He felt the direction is fairly clear on a couple of items. He addressed the suggestion for the Fillmore School acquisition, noting they originally had \$1 million allocated for that purpose, and the intent was to do more research, possibly leveraging more money for grants under the regional project idea. They may be able to leverage the Fillmore money with the Michigan Land Trust, which would be available to them for land acquisition, and that could supplement the \$1 million. He felt the consensus is that Council would like to see Fillmore School acquisition as part of the equation. They can put the \$1 million back in the equation by reducing the contingency of some of

the other items, such as the "Reserve for Capital Improvements". He agreed with Councilman Radtke that the school is looking at this as a "package," so the acquisition is the easier part, but the harder part is the long-term operational cost. He cautioned it could cost \$1 million to \$2 million to run the facility annually, although they have some ideas about possibly partnering with other groups and possibly generating revenue from that use. He stressed a lot of research will still have to be done. He agreed the response from seven hundred was low regarding the Plumbrook Road Resurfacing; however, they do not have any other means of funding Plumbrook at this time. If they use the road funding, it is possible another street in another neighborhood may have to be delayed. He felt the consensus is that the Plumbrook Road Resurfacing should remain in the plans. He thanked Council for their excellent feedback on the workforce development projects, and he suggested the City needs to collaborate more with Michigan Works, school systems, Macomb Community College, and other partners to bring a meaningful plan back to be voted on. He indicated they are looking for direction today but reminded these items will all come back to them in multiple ways, first through the budget, then the bidding out and approval of the actual amount, so they will have opportunities to formally vote on them. Mr. Vanderpool noted Councilman Yanez raised a good question about how much all of this will cost in maintenance, and he admitted that although there are maintenance costs for some of these amenities, it is difficult to provide an exact dollar figure. He indicated that, with the projects proposed, it is a very small percentage of the overall expenditure that would be required for maintenance.

Mr. Vanderpool agreed with Ms. Varney's comment that the reason they can look at such a wide variety of projects is because their growth rate was very high at eight percent, far exceeding what other cities are seeing. Part of that growth is due to a lot of these amenities, so a lot of the that is paying for the maintenance cost. He assured more detailed information on maintenance costs will come forward as these projects unfold. He recalled there was some talk about a pedestrian bridge at 18-1/2 Mile and Mound, and at the ITC Corridor, and he agreed those are great points. They also have a plan for a pedestrian bridge at Baumgartner so the Iron Belle trail system can ultimately run through the ITC corridor, across the drain. He pointed out this is another example of where they need the \$2 million because there may be regional opportunities to match those expenditures. The priority is to get the ITC pathway in, and they can then work on the pedestrian bridge.

Mr. Vanderpool addressed the topic of speed humps, and he agreed there is a lot of concern and trepidation about speed humps, but that is the purpose for the pilot program. The community feels the City needs to do more on traffic enforcement in neighborhoods, and he agreed with other comments made that they need to implement other calming measures, such as calming islands, more trees, more enforcement, better signage, and possibly speed humps. They are only asking for approval to proceed with a pilot program that would fund approximately fifteen of those streets, and it is likely they may report back to Council that it was a failure, or maybe they will find some limited success so they may want to consider it further. He clarified this item does not fund speed

humps long-term, but there is only money being proposed for the pilot program. He noted speed humps are not intended to be used on roads such as Brougham and Canterbury, but the idea is to use them on true neighborhood roads.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski stated she has to leave by 1:30 p.m., so she entertained a motion to appoint a temporary chair for the remainder of the meeting.

Moved by Ziarko, seconded by Sierawski, to appoint Councilwoman Schmidt to chair the remainder of the meeting.
Yes: All. The motion carried.

The meeting recessed at 12:16 p.m. for lunch and reconvened at 1:15 p.m.

E. Bringing innovation and improvement to the board and commission appointment process

Mr. Vanderpool mentioned that City Council approved a position to improve the board and commission administration, including everything from training to recruitment to retention. He explained their boards and commissions are so important to them, and he emphasized the importance of the volunteers in the City. He is pleased they now have a position that is focused on improving innovation with the boards and commissions. He invited Special Projects Coordinator Meghan Ahearn to provide an update on the Boards and Commissions project.

Special Projects Coordinator Meghan Ahearn reviewed the reason for this update, noting that their boards and commissions play a vital role in the organization, and she reviewed a few of their responsibilities as an example. She explained that their twenty-eight boards and commissions include over two

hundred volunteers. They need to take the proper steps to assure the Boards and Commissions program is thoroughly reviewed and updated to reflect its importance in the community. She stressed that, while they have a good structure for their Boards and Commissions program, it is in need of organization and centralization. She addressed some of the current program concerns, including a disjointed process, a lengthy application and outdated database storage software, a City website that requires manual updates, limited member orientation program and outdated handbook, and limited marketing and recruitment efforts. She informed that when City Council approved the 2021/2022 budget, two important items were funded for this project, including the funding for a part-time Management Services Specialist, and the purchase of new OnBase Boards and Commissions software. She explained that their new Management Services Specialist could not be present this evening, so she indicated she will make that part of the presentation.

Ms. Ahearn explained they have many solutions they will be working on to address the program concerns, and she outlined those solutions, which includes the collaboration with Applied Imaging to get the new OnBase Boards and Commissions software, the development of a Member Orientation Program, updating the Member Handbook, and publicizing recruitment efforts. She talked about the benefits of each of these solutions, and a short video was shown containing testimonials from some of the various boards and commission members. Ms. Ahearn thanked Broadcast Programming Specialists Dan Rizek and Bob Sergott from Community Relations for creating the video in

very limited time. She stated that these marketing and recruitment efforts will be implemented to create greater community representation of diverse applicants while highlighting the value of the City's boards and commissions. She offered to answer questions.

Chair Schmidt commended Mr. Rizek and Mr. Sergott for the impressive video. She opened the floor for public comments and comments from boards and commissions liaisons, but there were none.

Councilwoman Ziarko felt the phenomenal video should be used as a marketing tool and should definitely be used on the City's website. She commented that the new boards and commissions they have added have done a lot of work in organizing themselves and determining their mission. She appreciated the input they provided.

Councilwoman Koski stated she has wanted to see help with their boards and commissions for a long time, adding that they can now move forward and get the message out to the residents, inviting them to become involved.

Chair Schmidt commented about the orientation opportunities for new members of the boards and commissions, as well as returning members. She felt it is a good thing for members to refresh themselves on their roles and procedures, so she is pleased there will be formal orientation implemented once a year.

The meeting recessed at 1:37 p.m. for a break and reconvened at 2:00 p.m.

Councilwoman Koski suggested to Mr. Vanderpool, with consideration by Council, that Council members also be included in continuing education,

possibly one to three sessions a year. She suggested this refresher course could be held on the off-Tuesdays or possibly on a Saturday morning. She would like to go over their rules and regulations, become familiar and be reminded of their roles, the roles of City Manager, and the roles they have with boards and commissions.

F. Annual Reports...Progress towards a better future

Mr. Vanderpool noted they talked about the importance of their boards and commissions and highlighted a few of them. He advised they will be hearing more specific updates from the CommUNITY Alliance, the African American Coalition, the Youth Advisory Board, and the Sustainability Commission. These boards have to report to City Council annually, and they felt this would be a great opportunity to do so at the Strategic Planning session. He introduced Community Relations Director Melanie Davis, adding that she and her team work very hard to coordinate the good work of the boards and commissions, along with other initiatives.

Community Relations Director Melanie Davis stated over the last summer, she had the privilege of working with seven residents on the newest commission, which is the CommUNITY Alliance. She stressed they have been working hard to put together a strategic plan that will help them achieve their objectives and mission for keeping Sterling Heights a welcoming community and making sure every resident feels welcome, respected, accepted, and safe in the community. She introduced Stacy Bahri and Ricardo Harris from the CommUNITY Alliance.

CommUNITY Alliance Vice-Chair Stacy Bahri reviewed their vision and mission. The members agreed there are challenges within the concept of unity within the City, but especially among the youth in their community and schools, so they felt that is a great place to start with education to foster the change. She reviewed the results of a recent survey, showing that 92 percent of residents feel Sterling Heights is an inclusive community, 28 percent feel race relations have improved, 58 percent feel they have stayed the same, and 14 percent feel they have become worse. She explained the CommUNITY Alliance Commission has been formed to not only address inequities, both real and perceived, but to engage residents in events and initiatives that focus on education, inclusion, and leadership as a pathway to creating community culture that intentionally honors and celebrates all people. Ms. Bahri introduced Ricardo Harris to explain their objectives.

Ricardo Harris provided some of his personal background, noting he moved to Sterling Heights about ten years ago after looking at different places, but decided that Sterling Heights is where he and his family would like to make their home. Mr. Harris outlined their three objectives, being education, inclusion, and leadership, and proceeded to outline their strategies to achieve their goals. He noted that, as a parent of two children in the Utica Community Schools and Warren Consolidated Schools, they need to promote unity in the schools, especially between the ages of twelve and eighteen. They would like to hold some workshops by June 2023, and he outlined their plans for that goal. He stated they want to promote understanding by doing weekly social media

blitzes and e-newsletters, hopefully having this consistent by June 2023. They would also like to promote and have at least two live discussions or town hall meetings to allow residents to engage in root causes, have conversations, and invite professionals to talk. They would like to have at least two of these completed by June 2024, and he outlined some of the detailed ideas they have put together. He explained they also want to host six celebrations, hopefully by June 2023.

Mr. Harris explained they want to make Sterling Heights the most accessible community for those with special needs, and they hope to assess any barrier-free gaps on City property by June 2022. He added they would like to plan at least two events by June of 2023 where they can focus on at least one hundred residents to allow them to go through a day in the life of someone who is in a wheelchair, hearing-impaired, or some other handicap that will create a level of empathy. He added they will be working with the Community Relations and Parks and Recreation directors to identify those events and put together a strategy.

Mr. Harris stated their last objective is leadership, especially in race and diversity in today's climate, so they would like to create a resource for leadership and hold at least four events over the next couple of years. They would like to work with leadership to create a checklist that decisionmakers on boards and commissions can use when considering an amenity or event, to ensure they are inclusive and appealing for all. He concluded that their next step is to assess where they are

as a group, go through action items and assign tasks, and begin their execution of a strategic plan.

Ms. Davis stated the other group she has had the pleasure of working with over the past several months is the African American Coalition, and they have been doing a lot of the foundational work to ensure they have a sustainable organization. She stated Rhonda Powell, one of the consultants working with the group, is present today, and she introduced AeYanna Yett, the newly-elected Chair of the steering committee for the African American Coalition, to make a presentation.

Ms. AeYanna Yett reported their progress as they are establishing their Coalition and building their longevity. She explained their consultant interviews and the four overarching themes, making sure that the agenda being advanced focuses on the collective group and not personal agendas. She indicated that, although some members dropped out of the group because of an initial lack of structure, the members who remained were encouraged by the idea of the Coalition because they believe it is something special. She talked about the exercises and training the members went through, including relationship-building and implicit bias exercises. She explained the structure of their Steering Committee, and indicated they are still establishing their six members at large in the weeks and months to come. She stated their monthly meetings are open to anyone who would like to attend, and their next step is to create a permanent meeting schedule. They are working to create a group mission, which will be approximately eight words that create a message the Coalition can rally around,

and they will create messaging so the Steering Committee can be consistent and use for future recruitment efforts. They are also looking at connecting the African American Coalition with the broader Macomb County. She urged everyone to stay tuned to their progress on this important work.

Mr. Vanderpool stated there is so much good working taking place with CommUNITY Alliance and the African American Coalition. He invited Administrative Liaison Marissa Johnson, to introduce the Chair of the Youth Advisory Board.

Administrative Liaison Marissa Johnson invited the Youth Advisory Co-Chairs, Allison Habba and Fadie Arabo, to make the presentation on the work they are doing and what is anticipated for the future.

Fadie Arabo, Chair of the Youth Advisory Board, explained that their mission is to develop and promote programs, services, amenities, events, and specific engagement opportunities that make Sterling Heights a more appealing community for those between the ages of 13 and 18.

Allison Habba, Co-Chair of the Youth Advisory Board, stressed their goal is the same as all boards and commissions to make Sterling Heights become the best community for everyone. She explained this is extremely important because the youth is the future, which is a huge responsibility, so it is important for young people to get an inside look at the intricacies of what city government does and how it works. They want to be able to use their voice in the best way possible, and they meet every month, with the ultimate goal to develop and grow their city in the best way they can.

Mr. Arabo explained they have been consulting with the Parks and Recreation Department to see what they can add in the parks. They have a Sustainability Committee on the Youth Advisory Board, and he indicated his strong interest in this topic because he would like to major in sustainability. He also noted they have a Diversity and Inclusion Committee to promote the creation of safe environments and provide resources for teens across the City.

Ms. Habba explained another committee in the Youth Advisory Board is the Mental Health Committee, where they are looking to increase awareness regarding mental health issues among the youth. She hoped they will be able to get back to having a Mental Health Festival, which they had prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. She added that the last committee, Local Government Awareness, which is educating teens on local government and interesting opportunities to serve and connect with the City. She noted this is her personal favorite because she would like to major in political science and then go into law.

Mr. Arabo talked about actively conversing with Parks and Recreation Department on programs, events, and amenities that can serve the teenage population, and they are working hard to play a role in the community with “masking up” and educating their peers.

Ms. Habba explained they want to continue to create opportunities for younger residents to connect with local leaders and City officials. They have also been working with community organizations to plan a park clean-up.

Mr. Arabo stated they are working on inclusion, with the help of community organizations and Parks and Recreation to create a safe space designated for teens.

Mr. Arabo and Ms. Habba concluded by saying they hope that their presentation has provided a good insight into what the Youth Advisory Board has been doing, and what they are looking at for the future. They thanked the City Council for giving them a chance to have their voices heard.

Ms. Davis invited City Planner/City Development Manager Chris McLeod to talk about the Sustainability Commission.

City Planner/City Development Manager Chris McLeod stated he has had the pleasure of working with the Sustainability Commission over the last year-and-a-half, and he commended them for being one of the most dedicated boards he has seen. He added that they show great passion for sustainability within the City, and they have created a Sustainability Plan. He invited Chair Nathan Inks to present the work that the Sustainability Committee has done.

Sustainability Commission Chair Nathan Inks stated that Vice-Chair Mark Graf is present today as well, and he named the other members. He also thanked and acknowledged the work of two former members. He explained the responsibilities of the Sustainability Commission are outlined in the ordinance that created this Commission, and they have to use those responsibilities to guide them in determining the scope of their duties in both creating the Sustainability Commission as well as being able to implement the plan. Mr. Inks provided the history and framework of the Sustainability Plan, which was

created by an intern for the City in Summer 2019. In March 2020, the City Council created the Sustainability Commission Ordinance, and in Summer 2020, Council began appointing members to the Commission. The Sustainability Plan was submitted to City Council in Fall 2021. He explained they are now looking forward to implementing these plans and revising the Sustainability Plan as well. They have tackled a significant number of issues, including providing recommendations to Council and City Administration were for curbside recycling, as well as amendments to the City's Tree Preservation Ordinance. He felt the most significant accomplishment from the Commission was the adoption of the Sustainability Plan, which was the City's first comprehensive plan that addressed various sustainability issues, and much of the drafting of the plan took place virtually due to the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the most significant sources they used in their planning process was the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, containing seventeen goals. The Commission felt eleven of those goals were relevant to the scope of the Commission as outlined in the ordinance. He explained the plan includes a number of sections based on broad sustainability topics, including natural assets, sustainable mobility, sustainable development and land use, and environmental stewardship. He advised that within the adopted plan, there is a comprehensive series of implementation action items that is included at the end of those sections. It also lists responsible parties, being boards, commissions, or departments, which would be responsible for either weighing input into whether those action items should be pursued, and ultimately adopting them.

He added that each action item also includes how it would relate back to the City's 2030 Visioning Plan.

Mr. Inks explained that this past fall, the Commission began defining priorities based on a cost benefit analysis and establishing a plan for implementation. A list of fifteen action items rose to the top of the list, and he reviewed that list. He thanked the Council for this opportunity to present, and he offered to answer questions.

Chair Schmidt opened the floor for public comments, but there were none.

Councilman Yanez thanked everyone who presented today, adding it gives him a lot of hope. He indicated it bothers him that people do not look at public service as career options anymore, so to hear the Youth Advisory Board talk about encouraging young people to pursue it is welcome. He stated he is impressed that people are so willing to bring their community together. He understands that, in the Utica Community School District and the Warren Consolidated Schools, there are about fifty different languages spoken in each school system, yet it is difficult to find a "translation" button on the City's website. He hoped that will be something they can fix. He added he is so impressed with the quality of individuals serving on these boards and commissions and the work they do, and he thanked them.

Councilwoman Ziarko agreed with Councilman Yanez that what was presented is a sign of hope. She heard the common thread of education, inclusive, leadership, diversity, sustainability, and mental health from each board/committee/commission represented. Although they are concentrating

on different areas, they are all working in the same direction. With regard to careers mentioned by Councilman Yanez, she talked about the difference between "civil service" versus "politician." She felt at certain times, a politician acts in their own best interest, as opposed to someone who works in public service acts in the best interests of all. She encouraged the Youth Advisory Board members, as they move on, to encourage other youth to follow in their footsteps and take a part in this Youth Advisory Board in order for it to continue. She thanked all of the volunteers.

Councilman Radtke agreed with his colleagues, and felt it is good to see the wonderful work done by so many groups in the City, and the impact they have. He thanked them for their hard work. He agreed with Councilman Yanez about doing more to make sure the entire City is included in their discussions. He pointed out that there are many languages spoken in the City, with certain communities speaking it a lot more than others. He felt they need to make it a point to put out City materials and their ballots in languages other than English, adding they estimate that one-third of the City's population was born abroad. He pointed out that every member of Council lives on the east side of the City, and through no intention of their own, they may have some "blind spots" for which they are unaware. He urged community members to bring things to their attention so they can be remedied. He thanked everyone who spoke today, noting it was very informative.

Councilwoman Koski stated she is very impressed with the boards and commissions in the City and is pleased with that they have accomplished. She

likes the plan of the Sustainability Commission, especially their plan. She questioned whether any of the fifteen actions could fall under the requirements for ARPA funding. She thanked Mr. Inks and commended him and his committee on the work they have done.

Chair Schmidt echoed the sentiments of her colleagues, and thanked all of the boards and commissions, stressing they would not be the City they are without each and every one of them. She stated she is encouraged to hear that some of their youth want to get involved in city government, and she agreed the youth does have issues the City needs to address. She pointed out that the City is about to embark on a Visioning 2040 plan, and it is the youth they need to convince to come to the table and be part of the discussion. She attended the African American Coalition, commending them for being a great group. She anticipates they will do a good job in bringing their mission forward to the community, making them better for it.

7. **MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL GENERAL VISIONING COMMENTS**

Councilman Yanez commended the volunteers, taxpayers, and the City employees who make this a great city. He talked about the City being fortunate to talk about this wish list, adding there are “bedroom communities” already in a bind, trying to fund just the basics. He thanked the Sustainability Commission for their great work. He felt the City needs an internal recycling program as part of their operation, especially their cardboard and plastic bottles. He felt if they are going to force people to pay for curbside recycling, they need to lead and recycle internally. He felt they need to phase out curbside organic recycling,

adding that this material should be mulched back into yards, or the City should start its own composting operation and use the compost on their community garden or provide it to citizens for their gardens. He was pleased to see the Commission talk about monitoring the carbon footprint, even monetizing it, and use it as a liability when they determine whether it is cost-effective to buy an electric vehicle, etc. He felt lawns need to be cut less, and he cited the example of creating a path at Freedom Hill but adding a \$17,000 annual cost for lawn cutting on the sides of the paths. He suggested working with Michigan State University to look at low-grow turfs and see what it would cost for the City to put those in, thereby reducing mowing. He added he would not only want to see the financial cost, but also the impact on the climate.

Councilman Yanez felt the job training is fantastic, but he felt the City needs to adopt a Fair Contracting Ordinance to make sure trade schools are maintained. He noted the Union Building Trades provide apprenticeships, and he claimed they are incredible schools that do a great job preparing their workers. He added that apprentices get paid while they are learning how to do these highly-paid trades, and they cannot get enough people for these programs.

Councilman Yanez commented on Strategic Planning, which is slightly different because of the ARPA funding that is available. He felt they need to look at how they will do strategic planning in the future to have input from City Council as well as input from citizens regarding the direction in which the City is going. He suggested having an electronic suggestion box to get input. They need to look

at all of the issues they have, and he called on City Administration to rethink how they set up Strategic Planning.

Councilman Yanez stated he would like to see the City work with non-profits and community groups to get rid of trash. He has done trash clean-ups with the Clinton River Watershed Council, as well as some on his own, but he would like to see a more concerted effort to have a couple of days after the snow melt in early spring to go through the City and clean up all of the trash. He felt they can include businesses and corporations where trash accumulates, and possibly they pick up part of the tab for helping out. He would like to see the City start an internship program to assist various City programs, especially providing information to citizens by going door-to-door, adding that when engaging with citizens face-to-face, a much different message is communicated.

Councilman Yanez stated that, although this does not come under Strategic Planning, he would like an update at a future meeting of how the City's new social worker is doing, what she is finding, and what kind of needs they have and how to address those needs. He announced that starting in the Spring, he will be starting a "Walk With Your Councilman" event, and he will post on a weekly basis the community in which he intends to walk, with the hope that either his colleagues or people in the neighborhood walk with him. He commented that the condition of the City cannot be appreciated, good or bad, until they walk around it. He would like to connect more with citizens, and he felt the best way is to go out, walk and talk with people, and provide feedback. Councilman Yanez

thanked all of the directors and all of the presenters for the hard work they do.

He extended that thanks and appreciation to all of the City staff.

Councilwoman Ziarko thanked everyone for the time they put into their presentations. She stated this is her favorite meeting of the year because it is a meeting of possibilities, not that they are going to do it all, but they have an opportunity to talk about these opportunities. She cautioned they need to keep an eye that are out of their control, especially revenue-sharing, where Lansing took away the money that was promised them. She cited examples of what has been taken away, and she stressed the solution cannot always be to raise the taxes. She noted that they always thought of public safety as Police, Fire, and DPW, but they are finding out public safety is also public health, so it is something they need to look into. She stated she does not have a "wish list" today because her wish is to come up with a resolution when they have an issue that needs to be resolved. She addressed comments about where they live in the city such as the "north side" or the "south side," and she reminded because they are all "at large," their City is not divided, and all citizen's problems become her problem that she helps them resolve. She felt the manager/ council form of government is the best there is. They pay someone to run the corporation and do it right, and the manager, in turn, hires and surrounds himself with very smart people to do their jobs. She thanked everyone for guiding them in the right direction and stressed that includes the volunteers as well.

Councilwoman Koski noted that Councilman Yanez expressed a lot of the thoughts she had, but she felt this was a very good planning session. She felt

communication is good, but she felt it could be a little better, noting she would like more input from their residents. She would like this, not necessarily in the form of a survey with prepared questions, but what ideas they have and what they think. She recalled the Fire Department used to put out cards stating, "We'd like to know..." and she indicated she would like to start getting those out to residents for input in their neighborhoods, what they would like to see changed, and how the City can help them. She stated she lived in the southwest sector of the City for thirty-two years, and she has now lived in the northeast sector for the last twenty years, so she felt she knows the City. She emphasized all of the residents in Sterling Heights are important to each Council member. Councilwoman Koski felt the presentations of the most recent four boards and commissions was very enlightening to see and hear what they have done and how they have set their goals. She would like to know what is happening with all of the boards and commissions and suggested if there is a way to have face-to-face contact with them once a year or every six months to find out what they are doing, their needs, and how they feel Council can help them accomplish their goals and missions, she would appreciate it. She also emphasized that she would like to see the path go in that she had previously mentioned.

Councilman Radtke stated this is a meeting of possibilities, but he agreed with Councilman Yanez that they need to have an internal recycling program at City Hall. He also felt they need to mandate a recycling program for businesses in the City. He claimed they are the largest city in the state that does not have curbside recycling and expressed his frustration about the history of how that occurred,

when he claimed they could have had curbside recycling for as little as \$12 per household annually. He inquired as to how many refuse pickup stops daily.

Public Works Director Michael Moore replied that every week, they have 40,000 refuse stops, 40,000 compost stops in-season, plus 10,000 recycling stops, so they are just shy of 100,000 service stops every week.

Councilman Radtke has received complaints about trash cans being thrown or trash is spilled on the street, but he understood the City has a robust program to address these issues.

Mr. Moore replied affirmatively, noting they have engaged GFL over the last month to start creating and administering a report that tracks the complaint calls from residents, and the solution to said complaint.

Councilman Radtke is appreciative of that, noting there is only a very small percentage who complain, but it is still an issue to that person. He stated he would like to see the report once it is completed. He concurred with Councilman Yanez about a responsible contracting ordinance. He complained about some non-union contractors not following safety protocols. He agreed they should look at low bids, but they also need to consider whether they are the best bids. They need to expect more from those to whom they are issuing these large contracts, and they should have a higher standard because it is a lot of business for these companies.

Councilman Radtke stated he was hoping to see a report on diversity efforts today, although he understands they are still working on it. He felt in some respects, the City is moving forward on diversity issues, but in other ways, he

claimed it is moving backward. He questioned Fire Chief Edmond as to whether there are any African Americans in the City's Fire Department.

Fire Chief Kevin Edmond replied they do not have any African Americans in the Fire Department, but they are recruiting to increase those efforts.

Councilman Radtke hoped they are successful in their recruitment, commenting that in a city where eight to ten percent of their population is African American, it bothers him that they cannot recruit even one African American firefighter. He felt the City government should reflect the residents whom they represent, and although there are efforts to this regard, he expressed concern that sometimes it takes too long and creates an image problem. He agreed the City has done a lot in that regard, and it has improved greatly since he was growing up here, but they need to explain that change to everyone.

Councilman Radtke felt they need to codify ideas of new urbanism in their planning and zoning, especially walkable communities. He complained developers are often using the City's overlay districts to "muscle in" a building but they are not really considered mixed use. He felt setback requirements need to be revised, and he felt that homes with garages in the front, to the point where people cannot look out their front door and see the homes around them, create bad neighborhoods. He would like people to be allowed to utilize space to be used for "he-sheds" or "she-sheds" for their hobbies. He complained about driveways taking up entire front yards, adding that it goes against sustainability and creates drainage issues. When there are multiple people living in one home as a family, the City needs to facilitate ways for them to do so, such as possibly

allowing a “granny flat” in the rear yard. He suggested they need to look at the width of streets, noting that wide streets enable speeding. He added that the free parking they allow residents in the street is a great thing, but to park cars in a street that the City owns, maintains, and repairs, ends up costing the City to provide that parking. Driving tends to be slower on narrower roads because people have to avoid cars and obstacles. Councilman Radtke recalled there were going to have a traffic study done on the Dodge Park corridor, and he inquired as to whether that has been received.

Mr. Vanderpool replied the study included the Dodge Park corridor down to Stevenson, and also the Utica corridor, from the City Campus Center toward the Senior Center. He confirmed it is not yet complete although they are working on it. He explained that the delay has been caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, but he assured he will provide the results as soon as they are received. He knows the Traffic Engineer is still working on a couple of other areas, along with the consultant they used on the Ryan / 15 Mile Road corridor. They also looked at the Van Dyke / 15 Mile Road corridor where they are putting in some traffic-calming islands and looking at improved lighting and more physical pedestrian crossings. They are also looking at the Riverland crossing at Riverland, along their trailway system. He agreed the study referenced by Councilman Radtke is high on the list and they want to get it done. They have also made similar improvements to the Davis crossing on 17 Mile Road, east of Plumbrook, with better lighted crossings, strobe light crossings, more physical pedestrian crossings, so they are trying to improve these areas. He shared Councilman

Radtke's concerns about traffic calming and is a worthy initiative effort across the community, but he reminded they cannot completely reconfigure their roadways to something that is 99.9 percent built over a time span of the last seventy years. He agreed there are certain areas where they have to address traffic issues, and they are working to do so.

Councilman Radtke claimed other cities are addressing their built-out areas, citing Ferndale as one such community. He claimed they have shrunk streets, bumped out crossings for pedestrians, and created bike lanes. He felt if a situation is actively harming their residents, it is incumbent upon the City to do something. He expressed concern that every time there is a crash in the 15 Mile / Van Dyke area or a pedestrian fatality, he thinks about how they can do better and make a better crossing. He suggested more mid-block crossings, noting that some people have to walk a mile to get to a light; otherwise, they are considered jaywalking.

Mr. Vanderpool agreed with many of Councilman Radtke's comments, but he reminded that the City is implementing many of the initiatives he talked about. He cited the North Van Dyke redesign, where they talked about traffic calming, narrowing the roadway, and putting in a median and bike lanes, as well as the Lakeside area. He stated Councilman Radtke has been very involved in the North Van Dyke redevelopment and the Lakeside Master Plan, and that entire development will be far more pedestrian-friendly. He emphasized they are doing a lot of what he is suggesting and are spending a great deal of money on it, so they are not completely ignoring these initiatives.

Councilman Radtke urged the City to be hasty in their action to create a pathway at the south end of Moravian Park. He noted the existing catwalk still exists, and there has been some talk about creating a new pathway, but possibly it is incumbent upon the Council to use the powers they have to take back the existing catwalk. He admitted the two neighbors impacted by that would not be happy with the City, but he felt the entire community that wants access to their park without trespassing across other land may be enthused. He reminded the homes were built with that catwalk in place.

Councilman Radtke addressed the website and the email addresses that were supposed to be changed, adding they were supposed to be changed to an .gov address "that makes sense to people." He felt they need to fully redo their website, because he felt it is not mobile-friendly and is not easy to use. He hoped they have more help in the Community Relations Department to update it, but he suggested having a simpler website. He has witnessed instances where the website has not been updated or it is wrong. He felt it is time to completely update the City's Master Plan and bring their zoning in line with the Master Plan. He suggested hiring the consultants who did the North Van Dyke Master Plan. He felt they need to think about the kind of City they want to see in 2045, and how the built environment reflects all of the values they have been discussing. He noted that this is a meeting of possibilities and a lot that he would like to see, and he concluded that while Sterling Heights is a great city, it can be better.

Mr. Vanderpool noted that a lot of the items brought up by Councilman Radtke have had updates that have been shared with the entire City Council, including

the pathway at Moravian Park. He informed the catwalk was deeded back about thirty-five years ago, and he advised the Parks and Recreation Director is working on an alternative plan using the DTE easement, as shared in the update a few weeks ago. He is confident that is a good plan, and he encouraged Councilman Radtke to check out the update. He confirmed the update to the website is budgeted and is anticipated to be completed this fiscal year. The email addresses are part of that, but he reminded they have a challenge of prioritizing all of these initiatives. Everyone has brought up very good ideas, and they will be following up with a written report to City Council. He indicated they will need further direction from City Council on many of these initiatives, noting it takes four Council members to give them good, clear direction, so he encouraged City Council members to collaborate and work closely with their colleagues and to get others on board with their ideas and initiative so they can discuss them further in the budget process and allocate funding. He clarified he is not talking to one member but to all members, noting this is the next step after the Strategic Planning process. He assured they will be providing notes to Council, with a summary of Strategic Planning, and work together to see how they can advance the ideas that were raised at this meeting. He cautioned that some of the ideas brought up at Strategic Planning can take years to implement. City Administration appreciates the feedback, but their challenge and the challenge for City Council is to determine which of their ideas they will collaboratively prioritize.

Chair Schmidt understood that the plan presented is many years out, and it will take some time to implement some of the ideas discussed today. She referred to Councilman Yanez's remarks about curbside recycling and inquired as to whether ARPA funds could be used to purchase some of the curbside recycling bins. She questioned when their current contract with GFL expires.

Mr. Vanderpool replied that they are just two-and-a-half years away from their contract being expired, and they will soon begin negotiating. He cited this is an example of an item that can be raised at Strategic Planning but takes years to implement. He recalled that this item has been brought up at the last two or three Strategic Planning sessions, and the consensus conveyed at the last Strategic Planning was to hold off on universal recycling because they are so close to the contract expiration date. He indicated they will be sitting down to develop the next Request for Proposal for refuse collection services, and the idea is to work in universal recycling.

Mr. Moore noted Mr. Vanderpool answered the question very well, and he confirmed that the current contract expires in 2024, so they will be starting that process soon.

Chair Schmidt inquired as to whether ARPA funds could pay for a portion of the recycling bins.

Ms. Varney replied that because of the City's revenue loss, they can use the ARPA funds for just about anything, and government services is a pretty broad category. She added that providing recycling is definitely a government service, so it would be an allowable use.

Chair Schmidt stated if they go with a contract that includes curbside recycling, she would like to see part of the ARPA funding pay for the bins. She stated she has had more young people reach out to her about the possibility of tobacco-free parks. She does not have enough information on it, and how it would be to enforce, but she would appreciate some information on that possibility reported back to Council. Chair Schmidt commended Councilman Yanez on some good ideas he mentioned, and regarding clean-up in the City, she questioned whether they could have SHINE clean-up days four times a year rather than twice a year. She suggested that at least one of those days could be designated solely for trash clean-up. She felt they could get corporations involved in those SHINE days. She knows the homeowners who benefit from the SHINE days appreciate it, so possibly they could have three days designated to residential clean-ups, and one day to picking up trash, or they could go with two days for each. She addressed the concern regarding having a diverse Fire Department, but she pointed out that recruitment of any kind has been a challenge for every community, and she does not fault Sterling Heights as to why they do not have more diversity on that force. She understands why recruitment is an issue now, but they have been trying to create diversity for years; however, they cannot force people to apply in this City, regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, etc. She knows the City promotes itself and do a great job to get people into their forces. Chair Schmidt concluded that she is glad to see they have things to look forward to, and she felt that, with a little patience, some of these projects will come to fruition.

Councilwoman Ziarko questioned whether the single-stream recycling is still the only type of curbside recycling offered, or whether there are other types of curbside recycling that they could investigate, where the resident actually sorts the cardboard, plastic, and cans. She questioned if that is available, whether it is something they should investigate.

Mr. Moore replied that most communities have accepted the single stream recycling. He noted that since they will be preparing an RFP, they can entertain many different ideas and let qualified vendors come back with their thoughts and costs on that topic.

Councilwoman Ziarko pointed out that the two years of Covid have put them in a situation where people are quitting their jobs without having another job lined up. She felt people are reevaluating their lifestyles and their stress levels, and she felt that is part of the recruitment process for any job they have in the organization.

Councilman Radtke agreed with the idea of multi-streaming recyclables. He noted that works in Germany, so he felt it could work here as well. He felt culture drives everything, and he felt they need to look deeper as to why African American firefighters are not applying in Sterling Heights. He felt nothing is going to change if the City expects the diverse populations to come to them. He felt the City needs to go and meet them where they are and "bring them in." He referred to a point Councilman Yanez raised earlier about how his colleagues live on the east side of the City. He stated he is in favor of wards in Sterling Heights and felt it would be a better form of government. He stressed he appreciates

the entire City, but he often finds himself advocating for the south end where he lives and spends most of his time, and where he knows there are severe problems he fears may not get addressed by everyone. He felt if they have a colleague in the northwest quadrant of the City, they may be able to bring their issues. He stressed they can change things in the City, citing the example that they are now serving four-year terms. He claimed he was told when he took office that would never change, and that was changed within four years of his sitting on Council.

8. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITIZENS

Chair Schmidt opened the floor for comments from citizens.

- Benjamin Orjada – in favor of the City recycling internally; in favor of businesses being mandated to recycle; would love to see the Youth Advisory Board correspond with high school journalism students; would love to see the City have a type of wildflower preserve or conservancy waiver; suggested allowing clover lawns, which do not need as much maintenance; in favor of allowing vegetable gardens in front or rear yards if someone has a large yard.
- Ken Nelson – felt they need to listen to the people more on the expenditure of ARPA funds; felt website is a disaster and needs to be redone; felt City should use some ARPA funds to pave the unpaved streets discussed at an earlier meeting because residents on those streets want them paved but do not want to pay for the special assessment; felt if residents on Dawn want it to be a cul-de-sac, they should have a say; talked about sidewalks, street trees and utilities, which is causing a problem; infrastructure is getting old and needs to be repaired.

9. REPORTS FROM CITY ADMINISTRATION AND CITY COUNCIL

Mr. Vanderpool stated he has nothing further to report.

Mr. Kaszubski stated he has nothing to report

Councilman Yanez informed that the State of Michigan, through their Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, offers grants to help

supplement the purchase recycling containers, and he added that Mr. Moore is familiar with those grants.

10. **CLOSED SESSION PERMITTED UNDER ACT 267 OF 1976**

There was no closed session scheduled following this meeting.

11. **ADJOURN**

Moved by Ziarko, seconded by Yanez, to adjourn the meeting.

Yes: All. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 4:04 p.m.

MELANIE D. RYSKA, City Clerk