

CITY OF STERLING HEIGHTS
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL
TUESDAY, MARCH 16, 2021
IN COMMUNITY CENTER

1. Mayor Taylor called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
2. Mayor Taylor 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, Michael V. Radtke Jr., Maria G. Schmidt, Liz Sierawski, Michael C. Taylor, Henry Yanez, Barbara A. Ziarko.

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, **RESOLVED**, to approve the agenda as presented.

Yes: All. The motion carried.
5. **REPORT FROM CITY MANAGER**
Mr. Vanderpool reminded everyone that the City's Spring SHINE Day, which is the Sterling Heights Initiative for Neighborhood Excellence, will be held on Saturday, May 1, 2021. The volunteers will meet at 9:30 a.m. at First Church on Dequindre and will be assigned clean-up of residential properties that need assistance. He provided some history of the SHINE program, which was created a number of years ago to ensure neighborhoods are clean and orderly so they are doing all they can to protect property values, but also to help those in need. He stated there are a number of residents who may have financial hardships or mobility limitation and they are not able to maintain the exterior of their homes

in the manner in which they once were able. He stated some of the work involves mowing grass, trimming bushes, raking leaves, painting sheds, etc. He stated they have a core group of about 50 to 75 individuals but can always use more, and on SHINE day, they generally clean up between thirty to forty homes. He added this is done twice a year, and he urged anyone interested in volunteering to call their Community Relations Department at (586) 446-CITY to be added to the list. He stressed it is very gratifying and only takes a few hours of a Saturday.

Mr. Vanderpool stated that for the thirtieth year, the City is offering curbside collection of yard waste, which will begin on Monday, April 5. He advised that yard waste can be placed in 30-gallon cans, 64- or 96-gallon carts on wheels, or yard waste bags purchased at stores. He added that cans and carts must have a sticker on them, available at City Hall or the DPW building.

Mr. Vanderpool stated that Green Macomb and the Blue Water Conservation District have announced the return of their annual tree and plant sale, which provides an opportunity for the public to purchase young trees, flowering shrubs, wildflower seed, and other fruits and vegetables at very reasonable prices. He explained the sale is now open and will run through Friday, April 2. Those interested can go to green.macombgov.org to browse stock and place an order. The pickup for this area is at the Dodge Park Farmer's Market Pavilion on April 30 and May 1. He indicated there may be limited items available for purchase on those dates for anyone who is not able to order online, although he

advised it is best to order online. He added that more than 80,000 trees and plants have been purchased by residents and businesses since this program started.

Mr. Vanderpool outlined some of the events taking place to honor Women's History Month, including the adoption of a Resolution on tonight's Consent Agenda. He noted that Sterling Heights has had a large number of female leaders who have contributed to the city's success over the years, including the fact that approximately one-half of the City's directors and managers are women, and four of the seven City Council members are females. He stated the first female mayor of Sterling Heights was Jean Gush, who served from 1986 to 1991, and he added that Mary Zander was the City's first female Clerk, serving from 1976 to 1997, as well as Director for the National Institute of Municipal Clerks. He pointed out that the City has been blessed with fantastic Clerks, including current City Clerk Melanie Ryska. Mr. Vanderpool stated the first female firefighter in Sterling Heights was Bonnie Demeyere, who retired as a Battalion Chief a few years ago. He added women made an indelible impact on Sterling Heights, and they will continue to recognize their contributions through the remainder of the month. He announced the series of events hosted by the Sterling Heights Public Library, including the launching of a virtual program about Harriet Quimby, America's first female pilot and Michigan native, starting at 6 p.m. on Monday, March 29. There are now over 50,000 female pilots across

the country. He concluded his report by advising those interested in this program to visit the Sterling Heights Library website to register.

6. **CONSENT AGENDA**

Mayor Taylor stated this item is consideration of the Consent Agenda. He opened the floor for public comments, but no one spoke.

Moved by Koski, seconded by Ziarko, **RESOLVED**, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented:

- A. To approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of March 2, 2021.
- B. To approve payment of the bills as presented: General Fund - \$993,816.17, Water & Sewer Fund - \$2,980,322.45, Other Funds - \$2,534,157.35, Total Checks - \$6,508,295.97.
- C. **RESOLVED**, to purchase 8,000 tons of 'late fill' road salt at pricing available through the City of Farmington Hills' cooperative bid for the 2021/2022 winter season.
- D. **RESOLVED**, to reject the bids received, waive the competitive bidding requirement in accordance with City Code Section 2-217(A)(9)(b), and purchase multi gas monitors and accessories from Federal Resources, 235-G Log Canoe Circle, Stevensville, MD 21666, per quote #54190 dated 3/5/2021, in the total amount of \$16,969.
- E. **RESOLVED**, to accept the proposal by Allen Audio Systems, LLC, 24014 Haggerty Road, Farmington Hills, MI 48335, for sound and light production at City events for a three-year period and authorize the City Manager to extend the terms and conditions up to an additional three (3) one-year periods, upon mutual consent, as negotiated.
- F. **RESOLVED**, to accept a proposal from Canfield Equipment Service, Inc., 21533 Mound Road, Warren, MI 48091 for police vehicle upfitting for a two-year period, as negotiated.
- G. **RESOLVED**, to approve the cost share agreements between the City of Sterling Heights and Macomb County Department of Roads to upgrade traffic signals at twelve (12) locations throughout the city, subject to approval by the Macomb County Department of Roads and authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to execute the agreements on behalf of the City of Sterling Heights.
- H. **RESOLVED**, to designate March 2021 as Women's History Month in the City of Sterling Heights and call upon residents, businesses, and community organizations to learn about and appreciate the abundant and impactful historical contributions of women to the success of our country.

- I. **RESOLVED**, to approve the resolution adopting the Macomb County Hazard Mitigation Plan for the period of 2020 to 2025.

Yes: All. The motion carried.

7. **CONSIDERATION**

A. Mayor Taylor stated this is to consider nominations to the City of Sterling Heights Zoning Board of Appeals. He added this is an alternate position for a partial term ending June 30, 2023. He opened the floor for public comments, but no one spoke.

Moved by Radtke, seconded by Sierawski, **RESOLVED**, to nominate Stephanie Jackson for consideration as an appointee to the Zoning Board of Appeals at the April 6, 2021 regular City Council meeting.

Councilman Radtke indicated he had spoken to Ms. Jackson in the past and she served on the Eastpointe Board of Appeals, so he felt she will be a good addition.

Yes: All. The motion carried.

B. Mayor Taylor stated this is to consider appointments to the City of Sterling Heights Boards and Commissions. He opened the floor for comments from the public, but no one spoke.

Moved by Ziarko, seconded by Schmidt, **RESOLVED**, to appoint Karen Milczynski to the Sustainability Commission to a partial term ending June 30, 2022, subject to the appointee meeting the qualifications set forth in Charter §4.03 and taking the oath of office within two weeks.

Yes: All. The motion carried.

Moved by Schmidt, seconded by Radtke, **RESOLVED**, to postpone the appointment(s) to the Arts Commission to the April 6, 2021 regular City Council meeting.

Yes: All. The motion carried.

8. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITIZENS**

Mayor Taylor opened the floor for comments from citizens.

- Charles Jefferson – questioned how much the City will receive from the federal government and plans for that funding; requested explanation of how residents are billed for sidewalk repairs.

9. **REPORTS FROM CITY ADMINISTRATION AND CITY COUNCIL**

Mr. Vanderpool addressed the question of the American Recovery Plan (ARP), which provides assistance to communities that are projecting significant revenue losses. In Sterling Heights over a few years, their revenue loss was projected to be close to \$18 million. The ARP program will fund \$20.2 million for Sterling Heights over the next couple of years, calculated on a need-based formula determined by the Community Development Block Grant formula, as well as unemployment, low- to moderate-income, etc. He explained the City ranked rather favorably so their share is much lower than other comparable-sized communities. He cited the example of the City of Westland, which has a population of approximately 80,000, and they are receiving \$26 million. He addressed the question about the sidewalk repair program and recommended that anyone who has questions about it or would like to be added to the program to call 446-CITY, send an email to either himself or the Council members, or call the Engineering Department directly to get an inspection scheduled.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski wished everyone a Happy St. Patrick's Day.

Councilman Radtke felt the City needs to move to a better funding model for sidewalk assessments. He suggested it would be better to follow the model they use for city street repair, possibly tax each home \$5 to \$10 annually, and then

the sidewalks could be repaired without having to assess the affected homeowners. He suggested this would take the burden off of the residents so they could pay a little each year rather than to be assessed a large amount when it comes time for their sidewalk repair, and he recommended that they discuss this option.

Councilwoman Ziarko questioned whether homeowners can find their own contractor to repair their sidewalks rather than opting to go with the City's contractor. She questioned how they rotate the sections of the City to determine when the sidewalks will be up for repair.

Mr. Vanderpool replied that residents have the option to repair their sidewalk on their own, and some choose to do so, although he added the City's pricing is very favorable, and most people elect to have the City's contractor do the work. He added it also helps with the warranty, and homeowners also have the ability to finance the cost over a period of five years at a very favorable interest rate. He noted the interest rate will be very low this year, and it will soon be coming to City Council for approval. Mr. Vanderpool explained the City has a running list of areas that have been completed, and they rotate around the useful life of the sidewalk, trying to select manageable construction areas they know they can complete in one construction season. He explained they focused their efforts the year before last (prior to Covid) in the area along Utica Road from Metro Parkway to Dodge Park. He stated they repeat the rotation approximately every twenty years.

Councilwoman Koski recalled the City has always addressed the sidewalk gap issue. She noted Councilman Radtke made a couple of points that the City contracts to have sidewalks installed, and there are times when the final amount comes in less than what was budgeted. She inquired as to whether that excess money could be set aside in a separate account, to be used to split or share the cost with homeowners in cases where their sidewalk is quite wide and would result in a large expense for a homeowner.

Mr. Vanderpool replied they have reviewed a number of options, and Councilman Radtke makes a good point that if they could ever shift the sidewalk repairs to a tax levy, it may be more equitable; however, everyone would be paying for sidewalks every year through taxes, and no one likes to pay increased taxes. It becomes more of a policy issue for City Council. They are considering other options, including capping the amount of the assessment. He acknowledged that there have been years where owners of a corner parcel were assessed an amount as high as \$7,000 for sidewalk repair, and those residents were rightfully upset. Capping it to an amount they determine may ease the burden, but they would have to determine an alternative funding method. He cautioned that the sidewalk repair program is expensive, costing about \$1 million each year, so whatever they do to change it would result in having to subsidize it from some other revenue source. The plan they are proposing is something they believe they can fund through other revenue sources. He clarified these are only recommendations they will be making, and City Council

can adjust them. He explained the average sidewalk repair bill is under \$1,000, and if it is financed, it makes it more manageable for residents. They will be recommending a much lower interest rate to make that financing far more attractive for residents. He felt they may be able to use some of the unspent money from the sidewalk gap program as a funding mechanism for some of the ideas he mentioned, but he deferred to Mr. Kaszubski for confirmation.

Mr. Kaszubski cautioned one thing to be careful of is to treat everyone the same, and once they start a program, they need to be fair on how they grant breaks to people. They would need to come up with an equitable system across the board. Councilman Yanez questioned whether the property owners along Mound Road will be responsible for replacing the ten-foot-wide sidewalks when that stretch is redone. He replied to inquiry that he raised a similar question to Mr. Vanderpool a couple of months ago but that had to do with snow removal rather than sidewalk repair.

Mr. Vanderpool indicated in those cases, the homeowners are not responsible for the snow removal, and he added he had sent out some information last week that highlighted the snow removal program. He stated they try to make things as equitable as possible, but the reality is that the City's policies are fair and equitable to everyone 99 percent of the time, but there are extenuating circumstances that have to be accommodated. He cited the snow removal along Dodge Park Road, where the 10-foot-wide sidewalk is in front of homes, and those homeowners should not be responsible for clearing that 10-foot sidewalk,

so there are anomalies. He felt it is the same case on Mound Road, although he does not have a definitive answer at this time. He posed that question to the City Engineer, but he felt that a sidewalk along a major road is beyond the neighborhood sidewalk program and it would be the City's responsibility. He also mentioned that it is a County roadway, so there is another complexity as to the County's level of responsibility. He explained he would like a little more time to do more research on Mound Road, but he was confident that the homeowners in those cases would not be responsible for the 10-foot-wide sidewalk.

Councilman Yanez noted that homeowners with a 4-foot-wide sidewalk in front of their house are required to pay, so he questioned whether it would be more equitable for homeowners with a 10-foot-wide sidewalk to pay for a portion.

Mr. Vanderpool replied those are good questions and it will take more research and further update to Council.

Councilwoman Schmidt stated that blood drives will be held regularly at the Community Center, and she encouraged all residents to donate blood as often as possible. She stressed it does not take a long time, and everyone is very friendly. The blood products they collect stay in the metro Detroit area, supplying Henry Ford Hospital, Beaumont Hospital, and all of the local hospitals. She stressed this is a fantastic organization, and with Covid, their blood volumes are down so they are in desperate need of donors. She urged those interested to call the City to get more information.

Mayor Taylor wished everyone a Happy St. Patrick's Day.

12. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business.

13. **NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

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

Mr. Kaszubski stated there are no items this evening for closed session.

15. **ADJOURN**

Moved by Ziarko, seconded by Taylor, **RESOLVED**, to adjourn the meeting.

Yes: All. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

MELANIE D. RYSKA, City Clerk