

LAUDERDALE CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
HELD REMOTELY VIA TELECONFERENCE

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September 8, 2020

Call to Order

Mayor Gaasch called the Regular City Council meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Roll Call

Councilors present: Andi Moffatt, Jeff Dains, Roxanne Grove, Kelly Dolphin, and Mayor Mary Gaasch.

Councilors absent: None.

Staff present: Heather Butkowski, City Administrator; Jim Bownik, Assistant to the City Administrator; and Miles Cline, Deputy City Clerk.

Approvals

Mayor Gaasch asked if there were any additions to the meeting agenda. There being none, Councilor Dolphin moved and seconded by Councilor Dains to approve the agenda. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

Mayor Gaasch asked if there were any corrections to the minutes of the August 25, 2020 city council meeting. There being none, Councilor Dains moved and seconded by Councilor Grove to approve the minutes of the August 25, 2020 city council meeting. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

Mayor Gaasch asked if there were any questions on the claims. There being none, Councilor Grove moved and seconded by Councilor Dains to approve the claims totaling \$87,987.00. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

Informational Presentations/Reports

A. City Council Updates

Councilor Dains stated that the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization planned to attend the October 13 city council meeting to present on storm water topics, climate change, and the Adopt-a-Drain program. Dains also said that an update on light rail and bussing is coming from the Metropolitan Council Transportation Committee soon.

Mayor Gaasch shared her support for the teachers and students returning to school. Gaasch also said that Ramsey County provides TechPaks to those in search of new jobs due to COVID-19.

Public Hearings

A. Revisions Title 9, Chapter 7 Regulating Fences and Retaining Walls

Butkowski explained that staff revised the draft ordinance based on the discussion from the previous meeting. The general consensus of the Council was to allow front yard fences with conversations around heights, materials, and concerns unique to corner lots. The draft ordinance addressed each of these using pictures and less technical jargon to explain what was allowed.

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In response to the council discussions and community feedback, staff simplified the language to allow up to four-foot fences in the front yard. The draft limited front yard fences on corner lots to those less than 50% opaque, thereby eliminating the need for front yard site triangles. The draft also limited front yard fence materials to those that were aesthetic in character (non-chain link) to address the initial concerns from residents over the aesthetics of front yard fences.

After council discussion, Mayor Gaasch opened up the public hearing to anyone in attendance interested in addressing the Council.

Eric McIntosh, 1847 Fulham Street, noted that page seven of the draft ordinance struck the variance language. Staff explained that the Council could always hear residents' request for deviations from the fence and retaining ordinance and the removal of the language doesn't change that. Changes to that process was on the agenda for discussion later in the meeting.

Claire Zehrer, 2445 Summer Street, believed the wording in the new ordinance would cost residents money in unnecessary surveys. Staff said they would edit that section to clarify that not all property corners need be identified.

Josh Dirksen, 1815 Lake Street, stated that this draft ordinance looked better and was more concise than the original, but wanted to make sure that the language had a variance process. He said he does not have a problem with chain link or privacy fences in front yards.

Heather Brian, 1778 Eustis Street, shared that chain link fences were economical and a good long-term solution.

Gary Brandenburg and Leslie Kratz, 1773 Carl Street, stated that chain link fences can look good with the incorporation of decorative vines.

Diane Galvin, 1746 Malvern Street, submitted written comments asking for clarification of a few items. Staff said they would respond to Ms. Galvin.

Mayor Gaasch closed the public hearing.

Staff said they would revise the draft accordingly and have it reviewed by the city attorney before the next meeting.

Discussion/Action Item

A. 2021 Budget and Levy

The Council reviewed a first draft of the general fund budget for 2021 in July. Since then the local government aid (LGA) numbers were finalized and the fiscal disparities amounts were released. Fiscal disparities revenue was \$7,805 more than 2020. Staff revised the budget based on cost trends. Staff also eliminated the annual transfer to the development fund. This was discussed while developing the City's long-term financial plan in late 2019 to off-set an

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anticipated increase in fire service costs. The levy needed to be increased by \$46,291 (1.6%) to balance the budget.

Staff calculated the financial impact of the increase on homeowners. Per the county assessor, median valued homes in Lauderdale went up 6.5% over the past year. The market increase, plus the \$900,000 in new home construction, pushed the total value of Lauderdale real estate up 13.7%. The value increases drove down the tax rate 1.854% over last year. In short, in spite of a levy increase, Lauderdale residents would see a reduction in their property taxes if their home values stayed the same. The tax on a median valued home would go up \$4.96 because of the increase in value year-over-year. Not all of the new construction value has been recorded so next year there will be additional property value coming on-line to share the tax levy.

The preliminary levy must be set at the September 22 meeting, which sets the ceiling for the levy for 2021. The Council may reduce the final levy amount but may not increase it.

B. Resolution No. 090820A – Approving Allocations of the City’s CARES Act Funds

City staff was working with local partners to allocate the City’s \$181,419 in CARES Act funds. The City must report expenses monthly to Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB); all funds must be expended by November 15, 2020.

Staff totaled \$13,591 spent through August 31 that will be reported to MMB. This paid for equipment for teleworking, teleconferencing city council meetings, purchasing PPE and cleaning supplies, and staffing costs.

Staff identified other CARES eligible items to serve residents through the rest of the pandemic. These included elections supplies, technology for council members, and a website that allowed for better communication with residents. The items totaled \$26,000. The City Council may allocate funds to support area schools, hospitals, public safety, and Ramsey County programs that support Lauderdale residents and businesses.

Councilor Grove made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 090820A—Approving Allocations of the City of Lauderdale’s CARES Act Funds. This was seconded by Councilor Dains and carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

C. State of Minnesota CARES Act Grant County – Municipality Agreement

Butkowski explained that each political subdivision in the state that administered elections received an allocation from the CARES Act funds. Lauderdale’s allocation was \$1,389.48. Ramsey County incurred significant costs to provide the City of Lauderdale with PPE to run the 2020 elections. As such, staff recommended that the City dedicate its share to Ramsey County Elections. The City could purchase elections supplies from its larger CARES Act allocation.

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Councilor Moffatt made a motion to approve the State of Minnesota 2020 CARES Act Grant County—Municipality Agreement. This was seconded by Councilor Dains and carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

D. 1795 Eustis Street Update

Jennifer Haskamp, the City's planning consultant, updated the Council on the redevelopment of 1795 Eustis Street. Due to the pandemic, new apartment buildings were slow to fill in March, April, and May. That changed recently but Real Estate Equities (REE) told city staff and Haskamp that they were modeling different leasing scenarios to ensure the project would be viable should the pandemic or economy not recover as expected.

The Council discussed whether the sale of the site would be in January 2021 or whether the Council should extend the bonds or consider an alternative project. Haskamp explained that REE had completed two of the three stages required by the City's planned unit development ordinance. Butkowski said the City's financial advisor updated financial models to explain the difference between the senior apartment building and single-family homes. The redevelopment of lots on Eustis Street increased lot values. Ultimately, single-family homes do not recoup the City's investment and result in significantly less park dedication fees.

Staff and the consultant will prepare a project development timeline for the next meeting and work with the city attorney on a purchase agreement.

Mayor Gaasch called a five-minute recess at 10:03 p.m.; the meeting resumed at 10:08 p.m.

E. Planning for Halloween during a Pandemic

Butkowski referenced the newsletter article asking residents for ideas to celebrate Halloween during a pandemic. She highlighted the e-mail from Lauderdale resident Kendra Kauppi. She suggested a mask drive, food drive, haunted rides, and safe candy distribution. Due to the pandemic and staff working absentee voting on October 31 at City Hall, the City could not organize a community event this year. The Council encouraged residents to participate in their own chosen activities this year.

F. Social Media Policy

The League updated its sample Social Media Policy in light of new state advisory opinions. The new policy is shorter and reflects the new records retention requirements for data received through social media.

Councilor Moffatt made a motion to adopt the updated social media policy as presented. This was seconded by Councilor Dains and carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

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Set Agenda for Next Meeting

Butkowski said that the September 22 council meeting may include adoption of the 2021 preliminary budget and levy, nuisance abatements, website proposals, warming house plans, the August financial report, and the fence ordinance.

Work Session

A. Process for Handling Requests for Deviations from City Code

The Council discussed how to handle residents' requests for non-zoning related deviations from City Code. Staff summarized the current process whereby applicants must receive council permission to submit applications when the ordinance doesn't allow staff to process the request. There are pros and cons to this method. Staff will research other cities processes and bring back options to the next meeting.

B. Coronavirus Impacts Update

Butkowski stated that the Roseville Police Department and Ramsey County Sheriff cancelled their Night to Unite events.

C. Community Development Update

Butkowski shared that the bids for the storm water project in the Nature Area and Seminary Pond came in 40% under the engineer's estimate.

D. Opportunity for the Public to Address the City Council

Mayor Gaasch opened up the floor to anyone in attendance interested in addressing the Council.

Josh Dirksen, 1815 Lake Street, said he would work on Halloween ideas to share with the community. He also said he believed the City should reconsider its relationship with Real Estate Equities in regards to 1795 Eustis Street.

There being no additional people interested in speaking, Mayor Gaasch closed the floor.

Adjournment

Councilor Dains moved and seconded by Councilor Moffatt to adjourn the meeting at 10:51 p.m. Motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,



Miles Cline
Deputy City Clerk