

**COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
CITY OF UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, OHIO
MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM | 813 6529 7438
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2021**

Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan called the meeting to order at 7:03p.m.

Roll Call:

Present: Mrs. Michele Weiss
Mrs. Sandra Berry
Mrs. Barbara Blankfeld
Mr. Phillip Ertel
Mr. Justin Gould
Mrs. Susan Pardee
Mr. John Rach

Also Present: Law Director Luke McConville
Clerk of Council Kelly Thomas
Finance Director Dennis Kennedy
Fire Chief Robert Perko
Police Chief Dustin Rogers
Service Superintendent Jeffrey Pokorny
City Engineer Joseph Ciuni
Economic Development Susan Drucker
Interim Manager of Building, Housing & Community Development/City Planner Brendan Zak
Communications / Civic Engagement Michael Cook
Special Events Rachel Mullen

Council Meeting February 1, 2021

There were no addition corrections to the February 1, 2021 minutes.

MOTION BY MRS. PARDEE, SECONDED BY MRS. BLANKFELD for the passage of the February 1, 2021 Council Minutes as presented. On roll call, all voted “aye.”

Comments from Audience

Mr. Steven Wertheim, 4355 Baintree Road stated that he was attending the council meeting as a member of Reaching Heights Board. Reaching Heights is a non-profit that shares information, coordinates programs and sponsors events that connect the community to the Heights public schools. Mr. Wertheim said that a recent Board of Education meeting the District presented a hi-breed model for re-opening up the Heights schools all staff was call back to the buildings on Friday, February 5, 2021 and last week some students began attending in person class and others attended building orientation. Today all students were welcomed back into the buildings on a rotating in class and by remote according to their grade.

Mayor Brennan noted that he had received three letters regarding the South Taylor Road townhomes and read each one into the record. The first letter was from Mrs. Jodi Sourini.

Mayor Brennan, Vice Mayor Weiss and members of the University Heights City Council,

I wish I could be there in person to address our City Council tonight. Unfortunately, I'm unable because my presence is required at our school board meeting this evening. I'm reaching out to you tonight, as both a school board member and as a resident of University Heights who is interested in the long-term viability of our community. I want to express my support for the project to develop town homes in the Taylor Road corridor.

The housing market in University Heights is attractive right now. That is a good thing. The Taylor Road town home project would give us the unique opportunity to attract home buyers who desire new construction close to downtown and University Circle. It's my hope that these home buyers will move here and -- like me 27 years ago -- fall in love with all that our community has to offer.

I want more people to put down roots here as well as support our local businesses. If they outgrow their town home, I want them to purchase a larger home in the Heights and send their children to Cleveland Heights-University Heights City Schools. But they may not move here in the first place if this project does not come to fruition.

This town home project is unique with much vision. That's why the school board voted to transfer four parcels of land at the Delisle Center to the city of University Heights. The four parcels the school district owned at the Delisle Center were not usable to the district for educational purposes. This meant in addition to being responsible for the upkeep, the district was required to pay taxes on them. The city of University Heights owned an additional three parcels. Because of the shape and location of the parcels and the fact they were owned by two separate entities, they were unlikely to be usable or to be developed unless they were combined.

Ohio Revised Code (ORC) has very specific rules regarding the disposition of public school properties which are considered public assets. The school board must follow the law even though the law may not enable a public school district to maximize potential revenue the way a city can.

Due to the Community Reinvestment Area, the buildings themselves will be tax-abated for 15 years which the school district has no authority to contest or approve. Yet, if the land were developed, even under a CRA, in the first 15 years the school district will receive modest tax revenue from the developer based on the parcel divisions and the initial improvements required to develop the land. After 15 years, the district will receive taxes on both the land as well as the buildings which should increase significantly based on the project's value in 15 years.

A new development, as is planned for this property, typically increases the value of its surrounding neighborhood and often spurs additional economic growth. Revitalizing the Taylor corridor would bring positive benefits to both the cities of University Heights and Cleveland Heights as well as the school district.

The legal agreement with the school board includes a "claw back provision." This ensures that if the development does not proceed as planned, the land reverts back to the school district.

What a lost opportunity it will be for both the cities of University Heights and Cleveland Heights as well as our school district if that happens because this development does not come to fruition.

I encourage you to move forward with the Taylor Road town home project.

Respectfully submitted,
Jodi Sourini
Board Member - Cleveland Heights University Heights City Schools

Another was received from Future Heights.

FutureHeights

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University Heights City Council
City of University Heights
2300 Warrensville Center Road
University Heights, OH 44118

February 16, 2021

Dear University Heights City Council Members,

FutureHeights, a nonprofit community development corporation serving both Cleveland Heights and University Heights, was excited to learn about the University Heights Planning Commission's approval of the South Taylor Place site plan and encourages your approval of the project.

Our Planning & Development Committee reviewed the project at its February meeting. Located in the northern portion of the Cedar Taylor Business District, which straddles University Heights and Cleveland Heights, we believe the project will benefit both cities. Construction of high-quality townhomes on vacant, underutilized land will add appropriate density and be a good transition between the commercial uses of the district and the nearby single-family homes. The addition of 30 new households to the community will augment the local tax base, increase the vibrancy of the district, and spur additional revitalization along the corridor.

We believe that parking for the proposed project is adequate and that solutions for guest parking, such as a shared-use agreement with owners of adjacent parking lots or on-street parking permits, would meet the needs of residents.

Congratulations on moving forward with this dynamic project!

Sincerely,

Deanna Bremer Fisher
Executive Director

Robert N. Brown
Co-Chair, P&D Committee

Jennifer Wintner
Co-Chair, P&D Committee

cc: Mayor Michael Dylan Brennan; Economic Development Director Susan Drucker; Julie Sabroff, President FutureHeights Board of Directors



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The third and last letter was received from Mr. & Mrs. Michael Hancock, 3910 Bushnell Road and owner of the University Heights independent coffee shop on wheels "Hot Dog Coffee". Mr. Hancock stated that because of their coffee shop they have been able to serve and befriend hundreds of local residents. In the process they have smitten with their city, the diverse densely populated urban suburban neighborhood of absolutely wonderful residents. It is also because of the coffee shop that we have a unique perspective on development projects that impact the city. University Heights has the benefit of being a transitional neighborhood with elements of both urban and suburban cities. That is way Mr. Hancock believes the plans for Cedar/Taylor to be a very smart step in the right direction and urged City Council to approve the plans as submitted.

Mayor's Report

Due to circumstances beyond anyone's control the Building and Housing Department will remain closed until Wednesday, February 24, 2021. A voicemail or email with the department during this time and your message will be answered as soon as possible. All personnel in the department are out on quarantine as a result of contact tracing. Servpro will be conducting a deep cleaning of Building Department building and City Hall tomorrow beginning at 9:30am.

Mayor Brennan also announced that extraordinary circumstances the State of the City Address scheduled for Thursday evening is also being postponed, a new date will be announced in the upcoming weeks.

That concluded the Mayor's report.

Agenda Items:

A) Recommendation from the Planning Commission for Site Plan Approval from Knez Homes for the South Taylor Place Condominiums on South Taylor Road

Mr. Michael David, Mrs. Hanna Plessner from Knez Homes were present and noted their appreciation for the letters of support from residents and community.

Mr. David stated that Knez Homes is a residential builder and developer. Knez Homes have been in business in Northeast Ohio for over 30 years. The main specialty for the last 10 to 12 years is urban housing from Ohio City, Tremont to Shaker Heights and University Heights.

Mrs. Plessner reported that the site is 1.2 acres with the goal of having a bridge between single family style of houses to multi family to commercial areas. The site plan is comprised of 8 buildings with a total of 30 townhomes. Because the site is zoned as Residential Attached there is no need for any variances. The townhomes will have fee simple ownership with a HOA. The units are 2,200 sq. ft. with 2 car attached garage, choice of 2, 3, or 4 bedrooms, open living concept, large windows. The buildings will be styled to complement the area. The landscape will include several shared green spaces, a small pocket park, a pedestrian area, arborvitae will be used to screen residential area and a walkway extends from South Taylor to Wynn Road. All access to the development is from Wynn Road so that it does not serve as a cut through t South Taylor Road and per the request of the Fire Department there is a large enough turn radius for the emergency vehicles.

Mrs. Pardee asked where would the visitors park because the current businesses use the street parking. Mrs. Pleassner replied that each unit has space in their driveways for 2 vehicles and that there is ample street parking on South Taylor and Wynn Road to accommodate both the development and the businesses. But there is also the possibility to have permit parking spaces on South Taylor if necessary. Mrs. Pardee noted that Wynn Road is a quiet residential street and wonder what would the traffic be like with this development.

Noting that the applicant did address some of the concerns, there was still the issue of handling parking space for delivery companies and guest. Mr. Rach commented that with the four-bedroom units there would probably be at least 2 vehicles for that unit. So, he would still like to the loss of one unit to allow for on-site guest parking. Mr. Rach asked where would the snow be placed during the winter time?

Mrs. Pardee added in thinking about visiting family members guest parking would be important and she stated she was glad the project would also be going before the Architectural Review Board.

Mrs. Blankfeld noted that permit parking has to be a consideration because of the concern for guest parking.

Mr. Gould was also concerned about parking but not the use of a permit system of parking. Noting that Knez is a tremendous partner to University Heights and customer driven, Mr. Gould stated that University Heights was not Tremont and this has an affect on residential areas so it is important that there is no disconnect. Mr. Gould asked what was the temporary parking lanes for. Fire Chief Perko replied that those were fire lanes. Mr. Gould also asked about the eight (8) phases of building.

Mrs. Plessner stated that the development was being built in phases building by building, for example units one to four would be built first and noted that they also have to adhere to the schedule in the Development Agreement to complete the entire project. The plan is to pre-sale half the units in a building prior to construction then working on construction one to two building at a time moving from South Taylor Road towards the east across the development site.

Mr. Gould asked what was the time limit for construction. Mrs. Plessner replied 3 years. Mr. Gould asked if the neighbors should expect that this would be a 3-year construction site. Mrs. Plessner said although it could take up to 3 years for completion they will do what they can to minimize the impact for the neighbors and there will be an area near the site where they will not be building so that area could they could use to keep construction materials in order to keep

things away from Wynn Road. The personal builders will go door to door to introduce themselves and to give the residents their cell phone numbers in the event they need to contact them about anything. Mr. David added that they would have pre-construction meetings with the neighborhood so they would know what to expect.

Mayor Brennan stated that this development is maximizing the site and reminded everyone that the residential attached zoning was with the intention of attracting development of this type.

Mrs. Drucker added that this development was based on other sites with this type of density in mind and also that guest parking was not a requirement in the Residential Attached District.

Mrs. Blankfeld commented on having permit parking on South Taylor and said that the guest parking needs further discussion.

Mrs. Pardee stated that she would be willing to discuss permit parking in committee if guest parking became an issue.

Mayor Brennan agreed that the guest parking did not need to be discussed right now. There were different pieces that could be in motion. The intent was for this to be similar to Tremont and that he was satisfied with not having specific surface parking spaces on the parcels especially when each unit has two parking spaces.

Mr. Gould noted that the City had very specific reasons for the parking street ban and he thought if the city were to implement permit parking in one area of the city he would hate to see that model expand into other areas of more residential spaces. If there is a high-density area, then certainly have a new way of parking and a new way of being. But when you have housing that has the potential of having four bedrooms University Heights has some very specific concerns regarding street parking.

Mrs. Weiss thanked Knez and voiced her excitement for the approval. In relation to the Action Pest Control building she thought that the City has much grander plans for that area than to put a parking lot on South Taylor Road. This addition to that area, along with Cleveland Heights' investments in that area, hopefully in five years that area will look completely different and to put a parking lot on prime real estate would not hold well for the City. In terms of South Taylor Road, Mrs. Weiss said she agreed with Mrs. Pardee that until things are built and a parking issue comes up permit parking by Ordinance should not be considered. Mrs. Weiss said that she was part of the NOACA study in 2017 and 2018. NOACA paused the study because of funding reasons but was leaning towards making South Taylor a two-lane street and that in itself concerned her in the event they had placed permit parking and the street was reduced to two lanes. In terms of the desire to immaculate an urban setting, University Heights is not urban, that is not the looking that they were looking for. University Heights is an amenity, the City of beautiful homes and is different from other communities. Mrs. Weiss said that she loved the greenspace from the pocket park but having at least five parking spaces would satisfy her and that permit parking is not necessary at this point.

Noting Council's concern about parking, Mr. Rach asked the Law Director if this were to be approved was there a mechanism where there could be a condition stating there would be "x" number of parking spaces.

Mr. McConville replied that Council assumes the same rights that the Planning Commission had in the review of the site plan and is not bound to the recommendation. Council can either approve, deny or request alterations to the site plan by placing conditions upon an approval of the Planning Commission recommendation. Mr. McConville also noted his concern because this was a permitted use without the need for any variances. Arbitrarily Council has made a good record of health and safety concern.

Mr. Rach again asked about the removal of snow. Mrs. Plessner replied that if there was no place to push the snow the HOA would have the snow trucked off-site and that they were used to handling issues such as this in tight areas.

Mr. Rach asked if Council were to condition approval based on having parking is there any consideration to using the pocket park for 6 to 8 parking spaces so not to lose any units. Mrs. Plessner replied that she did not believe that they could fit 8 parking spots in that area because surface parking takes a lot of room.

Mr. Rach motioned the approval of the Planning Commission recommendation for site plan approval with the condition that units 12 and 19 are removed so that there are 8 on-site parking spaces.

Mr. McConville suggested that if Council were to place conditions of the approve that the condition be specific and clear because the approval relates to the site plan.

Mayor Brennan asked Mr. Rach to restate his motion for clarity.

Mr. Rach restated his motion for clarity as a motion to approve the Planning Commission recommendation for the approval of the site plan with the condition that the developer construct 28 units with 8 on-site parking spots.

Noting that the site has a grade elevation towards Wynn Road so surface parking may not be possible.

Mrs. Pardee said that she liked the aesthetics of the site and she see where the developer has the aesthetics of parking inside the garages so the people that live there are able to walk to their green space and not really have to look at cars. Mrs.

Pardee asked there was a way if two units were given up to create eight parking spaces and still keep the site aesthetically pleasant so not to look at cars.

Mrs. Plessner was not sure the with the removal of unit 12 and 19 would work of a parking area and that having parking butt up to the units would not desirable for the residents. Mrs. Plessner also stated that part of the residential attached zoning code ask that the design minimize conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles. Mr. David commented that if there was a request for them to lose units to accommodate parking spaces as Mr. Rach has suggested that it then be up to them to decide which units would be removed.

Mr. Gould asked if the development would work with surface parking and be pliable? Mrs. Plessner said that the site plan had been adjusted and worked on for over one year. Knez believes in the development solely and did not believe that there is room for 8 parking spaces.

Mr. Gould said he did not like the idea of members of Council and himself included in looking at the plan where Mr. Rach is the only council person with professional expertise to nick pick the site. It feels like it is a late in the game decision to say move this here, move this there to the point that Council doesn't even know the grade of the land but suggesting taking out this or that unit to add surface parking and parking may not even work in that area. Mr. Gould stated he shared in the frustration and wishes that there was parking provided. Hopefully something will happen to make that a reality, but he did not know if Council needs to impose that.

Mayor Brennan agreed with Mr. Gould and added that four of the five Planning Commission members did approve this site plan without guest parking, without upsetting the aesthetics or design that has been put before the Council by the applicant. Mayor Brennan noted that Knez has made a number of adjustments to the project. The project is still essentially the same project as the start with 30 units, high density and at no time in the last year to two years that the city has been looking at the project was guest parking ever contemplated, likewise it was never part of the zoning. With the type of high-density people do not want to look out their windows at other people's cars. Mayor Brennan stated that if 2 units were removed the city would also lose the income and the property tax that would be collected after the abatement period.

Mr. Gould commented that Mrs. Plessner stated that this was Knez's bread and butter so if the project does not sell it would be on Knez. If in Knez's market research and the projects that they do, if on-site parking was important they would have on-site parking. And while Mr. Gould said he would not purchase a unit where he could not have guest or guest who spend the night without having to find overnight parking for them that does not mean that Knez won't.

Mayor Brennan voiced his confidence in Knez experience as this is not their first time, it is what they do.

Mrs. Pardee urged the Mayor and Mrs. Drucker to find parking in event it becomes necessary.

MOTION BY MR. GOULD, SECONDED BY MR. ERTEL to accept the Planning recommendation as approved by the Planning Commission. On roll call, all voted "aye," except Mr. Rach, who voted "nay."

B) Ordinance 2021-01 Authorizing the Mayor to Enter into a Letter Agreement with Rea & Associates for the Performance of an Information Technology Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan and Declaring an Emergency (on emergency)

Mr. McConville reviewed four key elements changes in the terms of agreement that had been previously provided: (1) on page 9 it states that in addition to the final reports that will indicate that recommendations on the integration of the Police, Fire and City Hall IT systems; (2) under the confidentiality and security plan for information sharing that states the information and data provided by the city will be kept in a secure fashion; (3) on page 10 the terms and conditions were listed where 25% of the total payments would be due at the time of signature; 25% due upon invoice indicating that half of the work has been completed by hours and 50% at the time of completion, the total cost is capped so that if the hourly submitted invoices are below the total fee of \$18,500 then the City would not have to pay whatever the delta amount is. (4) Rea & Associates identified the project lead as Mr. Paul Hugenberg and also named the members of the IT staff.

Mrs. Pardee reviewed the different phases. Phase one: information security assessment. Phase two: infrastructure, network and hardware assessment. Phase three: server assessment. Phase four: critical software assessment. Phase five: compliance assessment. Phase six: future landscape assessment and Phase seven: the final report. Mrs. Pardee stated that she shared the report with the Technology Chair, Mr. Troxell who was pleased with it.

Mrs. Pardee clarified that this was different from the Starfish approval. This will audit the IT systems the city has on hand in the city and a strategic plan for the future.

MOTION BY MRS. PARDEE, SECONDED BY MRS. BERRY to approve Ordinance 2021-01 Authorizing the Mayor to Enter into a Letter Agreement with Rea & Associates for the Performance of an Information Technology Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan. Role call on suspension of the rules, all voted ‘aye.’ Roll call on passage, all voted “aye.”

C) Motion to Enter a contract with Baldwin Wallace University Community Research Institute to survey University Heights residents regarding potential changes in City solid waste and recycling collection methods

Mr. Gould stated that the Service Utilities Committee met to review the Baldwin Wallace proposal. The proposal consists of conducting the survey via a paper mailer that will be sent out to every University Heights household which is about 4,500 households. There will be a paper survey and a possible weblink to the survey. The goal would be to collect at least 400 responses. The project timeline would be 6 to 8 weeks. The budget breakdown is for survey design, survey management, data analysis and report development with a cost of \$1,500. The second part of the project would be the printing of the surveys would cost about \$1,250 and postage \$1,700 plus an overhead fee of \$500. The approximate total project cost is \$5,860.

Mr. Gould said that the Service Utilities Committee is recommending that the survey be completed by Baldwin Wallace and noted that some of items that the committee appreciated was that they were not the entity that conducted the solid waste study, they come from an academic prospective and have done this type of community-based survey in the past. Some of Council’s concerns from the GT Environment proposal are covered by the Baldwin Wallace proposal. The project has two portions, the survey creation, data analysis, overheard and mailing. Mr. Gould is suggesting approving up to \$2,000 to Baldwin Wallace to cover the \$1,500 survey design, survey management, data analysis and report development to get started and the \$500 overhead fee.

MOTION BY MR. GOULD, SECONDED BY MRS. PARDEE to approve entering into contract with Baldwin Wallace University Community Research Institute to survey University Heights residents regarding potential changes in City solid waste and recycling collection methods for a total cost not to exceed \$2,000. On roll call, all voted “aye.”

D) Resolution 2021-08 Urging Governor DeWine and The Ohio Department of Public Health to include Law Enforcement Officers in Tier 1B Regarding the Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccine and to Increase the Amount of Vaccine Sent to Cuyahoga County to Accomplish this Request

Mayor Brennan stated that this Resolution was suggested by Chief Rogers and that along with his fellow Mayors he would be writing a letter the Governor and staff urging that this be done. Mayor Brennan said that he understood the rationale that has been put forth by the Governor and his staff that the vaccine is scarce and they want to put the vaccine in the arms of a 75-year old person over a healthy 30-year old police officer but the Mayor also understands that the City asks the police officers to work under COVID conditions. Mayor Brennan added that Fire Chief Perko reported that the CDC recommends that police officers be part of the 1B group and Ohio has not followed that recommendation.

Police Chief Rogers stated on the behalf of all the University Heights Police employees he thanked the Mayor and Council for any public support regarding this Resolution. Chief Rogers added that the department’s own officers Lt. Todd Kinley who is a member of the command staff and also the Local FOP Lodge President conducted research to place this for consideration. As Mayor Brennan has indicated Law Enforcement is a critical service and officers in the field don’t always have the ability to ensure that they are maintaining social distancing when providing emergency type service such as first aid, administering CPR or taking someone into custody so that type of Resolution will go a long way in ensuring the department can maintain the critical and essential services. Having the ability to receive the vaccine would enhance police services during this pandemic going forward.

Mrs. Blankfeld noted that during emergencies the police officers are usually the first on the scene before fire rescue arrives and may have to render first aid, etc. The term first responder really applies and it is essential that our police officers be as well protected as possible.

Fire Chief Perko supported the passage of Resolution 2021-08 and made note of how the Fire and Police Departments rely of each other when responding to various emergencies.

Mrs. Pardee asked if either Chief knew what the percentage of safety personnel had been vaccinated thus far. Neither Chief knew but Fire Chief Perko expected that about 50% of the Fire Department had been vaccinated.

MOTION BY MRS. BLANKFELD, SECONDED BY MRS. BERRY for the passage of Resolution 2021-08 Urging Governor DeWine and The Ohio Department of Public Health to include Law Enforcement Officers in Tier 1B Regarding the Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccine and to Increase the Amount of Vaccine Sent to Cuyahoga County to Accomplish this Request. On roll call, all voted “aye.”

E) Ordinance 2021-09 Authorizing Permanent Appropriations for Current and Other Expenditures of The City of University Heights, Ohio for the Period Commencing January 1, 2021 and Ending December 31, 2021 (on first reading)

Mr. Kennedy stated that this was the proposed Budget for 2021 and was a culmination for two Finance Committee and Citizens Advisory meetings. Mr. Kennedy reviewed the changes that were made per the discussions during those committee meetings and Vice Mayor Weiss' request.

Mrs. Weiss thanked Mayor Brennan, Mr. Kennedy, Council and the Finance Advisory Committee for all their hard work as this is a difficult budget period. Mr. Kennedy is extremely capable and found additional ways to get the presented budget to a more palatable number for members of council to consider.

Mr. Rach noted that it was a long process, resulting in a much more responsible budget.

Ordinance 2021-09 was placed on first reading.

F) Motion to Approve the Price Quote provided by Starfish for Emergency Support and Service for Seven (7) months, March through September 2021

Mayor Brennan stated that the Administration has been using Starfish for emergency support while the Technology Committee continues to work on the RFP for an IT consultant. Mayor Brennan stated that there were two quotes, the one quote is for the emergency service support that goes through to September for \$38,6850.00. The extended time period is so as to avoid any disruption in IT support and not have to need hold an emergency Council meeting to get approval during the summer months when Council is on recess. The other quote is for a replacement laptop and docking station for Mr. Cook in the amount of \$3,261.95 for a total amount of \$42,111.95.

Mrs. Weiss questioned the cost of Mr. Cook's replacement laptop because laptop can be purchased for much less. Mayor Brennan noted that the cost included the laptop, docking station, software and hardware protection. The new docking station was needed because the previous one was not compatible with the new laptop.

Mrs. Pardee agreed with Mrs. Weiss concerns and observation for the cost of Mr. Cook's laptop because now you can purchase laptop off the shelf for less. Mrs. Pardee added that the Mayor's estimation of time for Rea and Associates, the Technology Advisory Committee and the whole plan to be completed is about correct. Mrs. Pardee said that she hoped that the RFP will be completed and someone selected for their services around September so having the emergency support have the extended time to September 2021 makes sense. Mrs. Pardee stated her support of this payment.

MOTION BY MRS. PARDEE, SECONDED BY MR. ERTEL to approve the Price Quote provided by Starfish for Emergency Support and Service for Seven (7) months, March through September 2021 and for the purchase and setup of the new laptop for Mr. Cook for a total amount not to exceed \$42,111.95. On roll call, all voted "aye."

G) Motion to Hold an Executive Session immediately following this Regular Meeting for the Purpose of Discussing Personnel, Legal and/or Real Estate Matters

Mayor Brennan stated that there were two real estate matters to update Council on in Executive Session.

MOTION BY MRS. BLANKFELD, SECONDED BY MR. GOULD to Hold an Executive Session immediately following this Regular Meeting for the Purpose of updating Council on two Real Estate Matters. On roll call, all voted "aye."

Noting that February is Black History Month, Mr. Gould asked for a motion for a discussion at the request of Mrs. Berry regarding the Black National Anthem.

MOTION BY MR. RACH, SECONDED BY MRS. BERRY to add item H to the agenda for the discussion regarding the Black National Anthem during Black History month. On roll call, all voted "aye."

H) The History of the Black National Anthem

Mr. Gould stated that "Lift Every Voice and Sing" is the Black National Anthem. The anthem dates back 100 years and was written as a poem by James Weldon Johnson. Then five years later his brother James Rosamond Johnson put the words to music in commemoration to President Lincoln's Birthday.

Mr. Gould stated one of the things that fascinates him about the excellence of the men and women of that generation is how educated, how multifaceted, the different roles that they played. Mr. Johnson was an author, song writer, educator, attorney, activist and diplomat to work as a Consulate in Venezuela and Nicaragua. Mr. Gould noted how amazing that one individual would have the opportunity to wear so many hats, especially a black man in the early 1900's. The words of Lift Every Voice and Sing harkens to some of the major esteems that repeat themselves in the African American culture. First being the collective efforts towards something larger than ourselves. The first line of the first stanza says "lift every voice and sing till earth and heaven ring" the idea is that together we are able to affect collective change, not only in our communities but even in the celestial sense. There is also the theme of remembrance of our struggles "stony the road we trod, bitter the chastening rod" this is in memory of times that have been hard, to recognize and honor even in the mist of the celebration of a song. Times in our history that we have felt at our lowest and in the collective sense as a community as a culture to recognize those times is not only cathartic but protected. It is able to say things happened, it was a difficult period and it is something that we will never allow to happen again. But in recognizing and mourning the struggles we have shared through slavery, segregation, modern struggles of economic depression and oppression. And, finally the theme of hope and faith. "God of our weary years, God of our silent tears, thou who has brought us thus far on the way. The idea that even in spite of the struggles and challenges that the second stanza harkens back to that we as a community maintain our hope and faith.

Mr. Gould noted that in this time as a community and as a Nation as we are struggling, as we are overcoming and trying to find a way through a global pandemic and in thinking back to this song and the words that were written over 100 years ago is a good reminder that maintaining our hope, maintaining our faith and maintaining our collective efforts as a community and as a Council can bring us to the same type of victory that we hear about in "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

Mrs. Blankfeld stated that she was delighted that Councilpersons Berry and Gould did this and that she thinks of Maya Angelou's "And Still I Rise". Noting it is the collective appreciation of each other's cultures and struggles. Mrs. Blankfeld said she took this to heart and was delighted it was a part of the meeting.

Mayor Brennan said to Councilpersons Berry and Gould that he appreciated and was glad that time was taken for that presentation. It was meaningful and appropriate especially not only this month but every month.

Director's Reports

Finance Director – Dennis Kennedy stated due to technical issues he would get reports out to council members tomorrow.

Fire Department – Chief Perko reported that the department is working on reinstating the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT).

Building & Housing – Mayor Brennan reported that the department would be closed until COVID contact.

Communications/Civic Engagement – Michael Cook reported that the next issue of Mosaic magazine would be out to the community the following week.

There were no other director reports.

Standing Council Committees:

Building – Housing Committee – Mrs. Blankfeld reported that the committee would be meeting the following week regarding the rental registration ordinance.

Economic Development – **John Rach** stated that the committee met just prior to the Council meeting and would be meeting again on either March he would be polling for a meeting per Susan Drucker's Economic 8th or 9th.

Safety Committee – Mrs. Berry stated that the committee will meet the first week of March.

Service and Utilities Committee – Mr. Gould stated that the committee is starting the process of collecting information for the rubbish survey.

There were no other committee reports.

MOTION BY MRS. BLANKFELD, SECONDED BY MR. ERTEL to exit Executive Session. On roll call, all voted "aye."

MOTION BY MR. ERTEL, SECONDED BY MRS. BERRY to adjourn the meeting. On roll call, all voted “aye.”

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:51p.m.

Michael Dylan Brennan, Mayor

Kelly M. Thomas, Clerk of Council