



Meeting Minutes City Commission

Monday, May 8, 2023
6:00 PM
Commission Chambers

Call to Order, Pledge of Allegiance and Roll Call

Present: Davis, Hanley, Larson, Mayer, Ottaway, Smith, Stonehouse

Approval of the Agenda

Commissioner Jermei Ottaway moved to Approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner Jessica Hanley and Carried Unanimously.

Announcements

Mayor Mayer had no announcements this evening.

Public Comments - Comments may not exceed three minutes per person. Please state your name and physical address when making public comments.

Margaret Brumm spoke regarding the Lakeshore Boulevard property and said the historic use of that property should be taken into account. She also spoke about issues with off-leash dogs.

Valerie Olson spoke about her concerns with fluoridated water and spoke about a study that was released recently.

Ron Elberth said he lives in Ishpeming but that the City's water supply impacts those in neighboring communities, as well, since they visit, work or eat in the city.

Brittney Saultman also spoke about her concerns with fluoridated water.

Presentation(s)

1. Michigan History Day Finalist Recognition- Rena Sager and Amber Tschirgi

Mayor Mayer welcomed Rena Sager and Amber Tschirgi to the meeting, and recognized the two Bothwell Middle School students, who won the Michigan History Day State Competition, and will compete at the National Competition this year. The theme for this year's competition was "Frontiers in History: people, places, ideas" and Rena and Amber won in the Junior Group Performance category with their entry titled "The Underground Railroad Was a Frontier of Freedom."

2. Marquette Area Sister Cities Partnership, by Tristan Luoma

Tristan Luoma provided an update on the Marquette Area Sister Cities Partnership, including a summary of the group's activities in the last year. The partnership has

updated their website and logo. Luoma discussed a desire to start Sister Cities visits back up, and to plan a mayor meet-up, and shared information on a student exchange program between Marquette and Higashiomi. Commissioners thanked Mr. Luoma for the presentation, and highlighted the importance of the organization.

3. Consent Agenda - Roll Call Vote

Mayor Pro Tem Sally Davis moved to Approve the Consent Agenda as presented, seconded by Commissioner Jermey Ottaway and Carried Unanimously by Roll Call Vote.

3.a. Approve the minutes of the April 24, 2023 regular Commission meeting

3.b. Approve the total bills payable in the amount of \$369,378.10 which excludes \$1,272.28 in City Commission travel reimbursement,

3.c. 2023 Fireworks Display Permit

3.d. Former Marquette Mall Site - Utility Easements Approval

3.e. Presque Isle Marina - Establish 55-Foot Slip Rate

3.f. Proclamation - Innovation Week

3.g. Proclamation - Workers Memorial Day

3.h. Ordinance #722 - Solids Handling Project Revenue Bonds

3.i. Resolution - Protecting MI Pension Grant Program

3.j. Schedule Public Hearing - Rezoning of 1501 Division St.

3.k. Schedule Public Hearing - Single Lot Special Assessment Roll #590

3.l. Stage Purchase

3.m. Wastewater Solids Handling Construction Contract

New Business

4. Mayor Pro-tem Davis and Commissioner Hanley Travel Reimbursement

Commissioner Jennifer Smith moved to Approve the travel reimbursement for Mayor Pro-tem Davis in the amount of \$590.14 and Commissioner Hanley in the amount of \$590.14 for the Michigan Municipal League Conference, seconded by Commissioner Michael Larson and Passed.

The motion carried 5-0, with Commissioner Hanley and Mayor Pro Tem Davis abstaining from the vote.

5. Proclamation - National Public Works Week

Commissioner Jennifer Smith moved to Approve the proclamation as presented, seconded by Commissioner Jessica Hanley and Carried Unanimously.

Commissioner Hanley praised the public works department, and said the workers deserved recognition year-round.

City Manager Karen Kovacs said that it's important to note how important the Public Works staff is at all times, but even more so during extreme weather events like last week's major late-season snowstorm.

6. Resolution of Intent to Sell City Property - 601 S. Lakeshore Boulevard - Roll Call Vote

Commissioner Jerney Ottaway moved to adopt the Resolution of Intent to Sell and to direct the City Manager to negotiate a sale of the property to Marquette Opportunity, LLC subject to City Commission approval per the Municipal Property Sales Ordinance, seconded by Commissioner Fred Stonehouse. Commission discussion ensued.

The Commission asked architect Barry Polzin to speak briefly about the development being proposed at the Lakeshore site. He presented an image of the proposed development, and said the plan is to leave a wide vision corridor open from the highway. He said hotels are a vital part of a tourist economy, and that all downtown businesses benefit.

Mayor Pro Tem Davis asked about the elevation of the property, as well as the adjacent bike path; Mr. Polzin said the plan is to maintain a buffer from the bike path, and he said the hotel should be three stories high, with a similar height to the nearby Fairfield Inn.

Commissioner Smith said the Commission has promised to not sell property on the lake side of the road and that she thinks this project is a small step that could lead to a major shift in the character of Marquette. Commissioner Hanley said she doesn't think this is the best use for this property and that she has heard from no residents that support this project.

Responding to Commission questions, Community Development Director Dennis Stachewicz provided an in-depth history of the parcel, as well as history of the broader south railyard and lower harbor properties. He said this parcel was identified for development in the original plan after the properties were purchased by the City, and Assistant City Manager Sean Hobbins added context regarding existing brownfield plans and hopes for this property.

Mayor Pro Tem Davis said she has heard from both sides in the lead-up to this meeting and she has mixed feelings. This property is on the lakeside of the road, but is also along the highway. She said it's interesting to note that the Commission voted 6-0 last year to not sell this property, and then revisited the topic in February, voting 6-1 to have the City Manager return with options, which the Commission is now reviewing. She said she had originally imagined the development to be closer to Front Street and to closer match the heights of the buildings to the south.

Commissioner Larson said that in his view, this plan maintains public access and is a reasonable use of that specific parcel.

Commissioner Stonehouse said the tax revenue on this parcel could be \$70,000 per year, which is important at a time when the City just raised resident property taxes.

Mayor Mayer said he didn't originally view this as a lakeshore parcel, and that tax revenue is important, as is the ability to proceed with this development without creating a new brownfield. He said this could be an economic benefit to that whole area of the City.

The Commission then voted on the original motion, to adopt the Resolution of Intent to Sell and to direct the City Manager to negotiate a sale of the property. The motion carried 4-3 by roll call vote, with Mayor Pro Tem Davis and Commissioners Hanley and Smith voting against it.

Public Comments - Comments may not exceed three minutes per person. Please state your name and physical address when making public comments.

Margaret Brumm clarified her previous comments about the Lakeshore property and said she doesn't believe building anything on this property is going to stop the historical use of the site. She said this kind of decision is what happens when people don't show up to voice their opinions. She said this project, along with the Vault Marquette project, will limit public access to Lakeshore Boulevard for several years.

Orville Dishno thanked the Commission for approving the Resolution of Intent to Sell the property tonight. He said that as taxes continue to increase, he thinks it's important to find a way to increase revenues, including by selling surplus City land into taxable use. He added that there is only limited beach access in that area as it is, and that the shoreline north of there is very publicly accessible.

Comments from the Commission

Commissioner Larson said this was his first meeting as a Commissioner where there was a lot of discussion and varying opinions. He said he hopes City is able staff to negotiate effectively, while keeping those varying viewpoints in mind.

Commissioner Ottaway said he often hears from residents asking for their taxes to be lowered and to make the City as affordable as possible, but noted that items that could lead to that, such as property sales, are always going to be somewhat contentious. He said there were great discussions about this, and he applauded the City Manager, staff and Commission for reaching an outcome and for not pushing this topic off.

Mayor Pro Tem Davis had no comments.

Commissioner Smith said she agreed with Commissioner Ottaway that the Commission discussion on this issue really reflects the community's varied views. She said she will support the project, even though she voted against it, and will attempt to make it beneficial for everyone.

Commissioner Stonehouse said this was a tough decision tonight, but it was an

example of the Commission engaging in reasoned debate. He said the recent snowstorm was met with a magnificent effort by Public Works crews, and said the storm also highlighted excellent work by City engineers and stormwater technicians years in advance. He compared the storm to the one that hit Houghton County a few years ago and did significant damage to infrastructure.

Commissioner Hanley said it was nice to see the debate tonight. As the decision is made, she said, it's time to move forward in a way that benefits everyone.

Mayor Mayer said that tonight's vote allows for negotiation for the sale of the property, but that the Commission would need to vote again later to actually sell the parcel. He said it's important to recognize that the vote to sell property will require five affirmative votes.

Comments from the City Manager

City Manager Karen Kovacs praised the election workers who staffed last week's elections, as well as the staff of the Clerk's office, some of whom made accommodations to spend the night away from home to ensure that they would be able to get to work for Election Day. She said there is a great deal of staff dedication, from public works and public safety to the staff of City Hall and all the way down to City election workers.

Adjournment

Mayor Mayer adjourned the meeting at 7:24 p.m.

Cody O. Mayer, Mayor

Kyle Whitney, City Clerk

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