

CITY OF STERLING HEIGHTS
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL
TUESDAY, MARCH 1, 2022
IN CITY HALL

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 informed that, due to a scheduling conflict with the Michigan Municipal League Capital Conference, the second City Council meeting in March will be held on Monday, March 14, 2022, at 7 p.m. He reminded everyone that holiday lights must be removed, and Code Enforcers are out to enforce this restriction. He added that they do not like to write citations for this, and they appreciate everyone's compliance.

Mr. Vanderpool talked about property values and referred to a recent article in Crain's Detroit Business, which mentioned that Sterling Heights, along with a couple of other communities, continues to have strong property values. He noted that Sterling Heights, with almost 2,000 sales, showed a 17 percent increase, with property values now an average of \$260,000. He stressed this speaks to what the City has been doing over the past few years in adding amenities and stated that many of these cities have worked to create amenities from parks to vibrant downtowns, which have had a positive impact on desirability. He thanked the voters of Sterling Heights for the *Re*Creating Recreation initiative, resulting in massive transformative improvements to the park system throughout the City,

including quality-of-life services, which all reflect positively in property values. He added that property assessment notices are going out this week, and those strong values are reflected in the gains seen in the property assessments, which is good. This directly correlates to community wealth, so one of the reasons they are prospering as a community is because of the transformative initiatives taking place, as well as the economic activity with businesses expanding and improvements to commercial centers. He pointed out that Sterling Heights continues to grow in population because of these reasons, unlike other areas of the state that are stagnant or declining in population.

Mr. Vanderpool talked about the Ukraine crisis and what the Sterling Heights community may be able to do to help support Ukrainians in their suffering. He outlined the action items that will be initiated, without objection from the Mayor and City Council, as an expression of solidarity. He stated "The Halo" will be lit up yellow and blue starting tomorrow night and through the month of March, with the hope that the thousands of motorists who travel that area every day will take note of this lighting and keep innocent Ukrainians in their thoughts and prayers. He informed that the Community Relations Department will be coordinating a special program to honor Ukrainians at the Cultural Exchange Program, scheduled to take place at the Community Center on March 11, 2022, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. He added this is a great event to honor the Ukrainian heritage. He stated the Clergy Forum and the Ethnic Advisory Committee will be involved in this special program. He emphasized that Sterling Heights has a very rich tradition of welcoming refugees from around the world and has served as a leader in that regard, greatly benefitting refugees from this spirit of inclusiveness. He explained they will be reaching out to the refugee placement organization so they know that Sterling Heights is a safe harbor for Ukrainian refugees. The Community Relations Department is identifying charitable organizations such as the Red Cross and others and will publicize links for residents who may wish to contribute to help Ukrainians during their time of need. He stressed that Sterling Heights has an

outstanding reputation as a compassionate, inclusive, and welcoming city, and they will do all they can as a community to ease the pain for not only Ukrainians but others who may be suffering as well. Mr. Vanderpool concluded his report by stating that, without objection, they will proceed with the initiatives as outlined, and they welcome any other feedback and ideas that City Council may have.

Mayor Taylor and the City Council members voiced no objections. Mayor Taylor stated their hearts go out to the innocent Ukrainian people, and he felt the initiatives outlined are all good ideas. He hopes for a speedy resolution.

6. PRESENTATIONS

A. Mayor Taylor stated this is a resolution of the Sterling Heights City Council recognizing and congratulating Connor Sarvida Drobek for achieving the rank of Eagle Scout. He stated he has the honor of presenting this Resolution, and he provided some background on Connor and his Eagle Scout project, noting that Connor is a sophomore at Brother Rice High School and an active member of Boy Scouts Troup #1478, based out of St. Anne's Catholic Grade School in Warren. He explained Connor made a commitment to earn the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest rank attainable, and for his mandatory Eagle Scout project, he collected gently-used athletic shoes for underprivileged students in the Philippines, who lack the means to purchase athletic shoes and equipment for training and competitions. He added that Connor's mother served as his inspiration for this project, noting that she emigrated from the Philippines and her participation in athletics in her native country helped her to attain her dream of becoming a nurse here in the United States.

Mayor Taylor spoke of the requirements to earn the rank of Eagle Scout, and added that since its inception in 1911, only four percent of scouts have earned that rank. He stated the City is fortunate to have Connor among its residents.

Mayor Taylor presented Connor Sarvida Drobek with the Resolution recognizing and congratulating him for achieving the rank of Eagle Scout. He asked Connor how he came up with the idea to collect the gently-used athletic shoes.

Connor replied that his mother ran track in seventh grade in the Philippines, and they did not have running shoes, but had to train and compete in their school shoes. He felt that is not right and stressed that athletic shoes are needed to run.

Mayor Taylor inquired as to how he found the used athletic shoes to donate.

Connor replied to inquiry that he started this project when he was in the eighth grade, so his search for shoes began in his middle school and his current high school. He requested donations from anyone who had gently-used shoes they no longer wanted. He estimated that he collected around eighty pairs of shoes.

Mayor Taylor inquired as to whether Connor heard from anyone who received the shoes, and whether he received any feedback.

Connor stated he did not receive anything from the people who received the shoes, but he received emails from his sponsors in the Philippines, who happens to be his mom's track coach and his friend.

Willie Dechavez, Executive Director of United States Pinoys for Good Governance (USP4GG), a global group in Michigan, explained they are involved in community services and events, and he stated they want to present a Certificate to Connor to recognize this kind gesture to the people of the Philippines. He introduced the president of their organization, Brenda Sanagustin.

Brenda Sanagustin, President of USP4GG, thanked City Council for the opportunity to present Connor with a Certificate of Appreciation, adding that he is an inspiration. She presented him with the Certificate of Appreciation for his services, dedication, and generosity in collecting the gently-used shoes and sending them to the people of the Philippines. She stated they hope in the future there will be more people like Connor.

Moved by Sierawski, seconded by Schmidt, **RESOLVED**, to adopt the resolution recognizing and congratulating Connor Sarvida Drobek for achieving the rank of Eagle Scout.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski congratulated and thanked Connor for being so inspirational. She also congratulated his parents and grandmother, adding that she is looking forward to seeing other great things he will do.

Councilwoman Ziarko emphasized to Connor that this was a project he has worked on over the last several years, but his recognition as an Eagle Scout is something he will take through his life regardless of what he does. She added that is something for which to be proud.

Mayor Taylor congratulated Connor and his family, and he is looking forward to more great things from him in the future.

Yes: All. The motion carried.

7. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Taylor stated this item is consideration of the Consent Agenda. He opened the floor for public comments.

- Ken Nelson – Item 7-A; quoted an excerpt on page 7, which stated the he “claimed” that “item 7-J is adding \$12.5 million in additional debt,” he requested that “claimed” be changed to “stated.”

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

- A. To approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 15, 2022.
- B. To approve payment of the bills as presented: General Fund - \$879,056.94, Water & Sewer Fund - \$3,043,333.37, Other Funds - \$1,630,906.62, Total Checks - \$5,553,296.93.
- C. **RESOLVED**, to purchase GearGrid lockers from GearGrid Corporation, 670 15th St SW, Forest Lake, MN 55025, at pricing available through a NPPGov cooperative purchasing contract , #PS20025, at a total cost of \$15,018.
- D. **RESOLVED**, to purchase twenty-six (26) Dell Latitude 5424 rugged laptop computers and two (2) Dell Latitude 7220 rugged tablets from Access Interactive, LLC, 46665 Magellan Drive, Novi, MI 48377, at pricing available through the Midwestern Higher Education Commission cooperative purchasing program, contract #MHEC-07012015, at a cumulative cost of \$82,468 and authorize a budget amendment in the amount of \$14,008 using State Forfeiture Fund reserves.
- E. **RESOLVED**, to purchase the OSCR360 high resolution capture camera and software kit from L-Tron Corporation, 7911 Lehigh Crossing, Suite 6, Victor, NY 14564, at a total cost of \$10,915.
- F. **RESOLVED**, to award the bid for turf fertilization and weed control of major road medians, guardrails, and retention ponds to Green World, Inc., 1401 Souter Blvd., Troy, MI 48083, at unit prices bid for the period March 2022 through November 30, 2023.
- G. **RESOLVED**, to accept proposals by Gibraltar Construction Co., 2650 Van Horn Rd, Trenton, MI 48183 and Warren Contractors & Development, Inc., 14979 Technology Dr., Shelby Twp., MI 48315, for general construction services for a three-year period and authorize the City Manager to exercise the option of extending the terms and conditions of the proposals for two (2) additional one-year periods upon mutual consent.

- H. **RESOLVED**, to accept the proposal by Kent Communications, Inc., 3901 East Parris Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49512, for the printing and mailing of city forms for the term of one-year at an annual cost of \$70,200 and authorize the City Manager to extend the terms and conditions of the proposal for up to five (5) additional one-year terms.
- I. **RESOLVED**, to:
 - 1) Reschedule the first regular meeting for May 2022 from Tuesday, May 3, 2022, to Wednesday, May 4, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. and direct the City Clerk to provide the appropriate notice as required by Michigan's Open Meetings Act; and
 - 2) Adopt the resolution, as amended, establishing the schedule of City Council Budget Workshops and Charter Public Hearing for the purpose of reviewing and acting upon the fiscal year 2022/23 proposed budget and to direct the City Clerk to provide the appropriate notice as required by Michigan's Open Meetings Act.
- J. **RESOLVED**, to approve two non-standard Public Utility Easements for water main installations at the Stellantis trailer marshaling yard, 35777 Van Dyke, in Section 28, PSP20-0006, and authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to sign the Easements on behalf of the City.
- K. **RESOLVED**, to adopt the resolution designating March 6, 2022, as Black Balloon Day in the City of Sterling Heights.
- L. **RESOLVED**, to set the public hearing on the application by the City of Sterling Heights for a Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grant for land acquisition for a portion of Fillmore Elementary School property at 8655 Irving, Sterling Heights, MI 48312 on Monday, March 14, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.

Yes: All. The motion carried.

8. **CONSIDERATION**

A. Mayor Taylor stated this is to consider appointments to the City of Sterling Heights boards and commissions. He opened the floor for public comments, but no one from the audience spoke.

Housing Commission

Mayor Taylor explained this is a Council appointment to an open seat, with partial term ending June 30, 2025.

Moved by Schmidt, seconded by Ziarko, **RESOLVED**, to appoint Pamela Terry to the Housing Commission to a term ending June 30, 2025, 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.

Arts Commission

Moved by Sierawski, seconded by Ziarko, **RESOLVED**, to appoint Steve Couchman to the Arts Commission to a term ending June 30, 2025, 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 Sierawski, seconded by Ziarko, **RESOLVED**, to appoint Krystina Richardson to the Arts Commission to a term ending June 30, 2023, 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.

9. **COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITIZENS**

Mayor Taylor opened the floor for comments from the audience.

- Ken Nelson – noted that meeting minutes are required to be made available to the public within eight days following a meeting; cited an excerpt of his comments from a previous meeting and pointed out he spoke in more detail; public comments should be fully reflected in minutes.
- Bob Sergott – spoke on behalf of the Drug-Free Coalition to remind everyone National Black Balloon Day is Sunday, March 6th; they are hosting an event at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 3rd at Christ Lutheran Church; open to the public and refreshments will be served; Black Balloon Day is to remember everyone lost in the epidemic of opioids.

Mayor Taylor presented the Resolution (which was Item 7-K) to the members of the Sterling Heights Drug-Free Coalition who were present this evening.

- State Senator Stephanie Chang – currently a State Senator downriver, but with redistricting, she is looking forward to the opportunity to serve a precinct of Sterling Heights; assured she will work hard; provided some of her background information.
- State Senator Paul Wojno – introduced himself and hopes he has the opportunity to serve this community over the next four years; the new district in which he is currently serving will take in half the City of Sterling Heights, between Van Dyke and Hayes, as well as parts of Warren and Centerline, and the east side of Detroit to Jefferson; looks forward to meeting everyone.

Mayor Taylor thanked both senators for being here tonight, adding the City has a great relationship with their State Representatives and State Senator to make sure their voice is heard in Lansing. He appreciated their being present tonight and introducing themselves.

- Evie Wolf – college student; requested information on how to write a bill or proposal; would like to talk with someone for help on this.

Mayor Taylor suggested she leave her information with the City Clerk, and he will reach out to her via text or email to see if he can put her in contact with either a council member or department head, depending upon the information she is seeking.

- Sanford Williams – questioned whether there is any update on dispensaries in Sterling Heights.

- Steven Thiel – former Sterling Heights resident now lives in Grosse Pointe; talked about an incident involving a raid of a wrong home; thanked the Sterling Heights Police Department for being willing to have dialog about the mistake; suggested the Police Department could have a phone number for people to call.

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

Mr. Vanderpool clarified that the meeting minutes provided are not a verbatim transcript but rather a summary of what occurred. He advised that anyone wanting more information about a meeting can watch the meeting or the rebroadcast on the City's on-demand service and navigate to the specific portion of the meeting rather quickly.

Councilman Yanez reminded that March is Reading Month, and he encouraged people to read to a youngster if they get the opportunity. He added that March is also National Social Worker Month, and he recognized the great work that social workers do. Councilman Yanez recognized the State Senators who were present this evening.

Councilman Yanez stated he was going to pull Item 7-F off of the Consent Agenda this evening but they have to focus specifically on that agenda item for further discussion. He explained he would like to talk about something bigger and broader. He noted that item was for fertilizing and weed control of algae in ponds, but he pointed out that the backup material explains that a lot of the chemicals used are carcinogenic, including the fertilizer that gets into the stormwater systems, gets into the Great Lakes, and causes grasses to overgrow, rot, and smell. He felt they spend a lot of money to solve problems that also create problems. He explained it is a two-year program, so it is over \$90,000 they are spending to make their grass green and keep the weeds off of the posts on the medians. He commented that they are spending \$17,000 a year to mow the grass behind the pathway behind Freedom Hill. He questioned how much more they are spending to mow grass throughout the entire city, and he did not feel that is sustainable. He recalled at a recent meeting where some of their boards and commissions gave presentations, one such presentation was from the Sustainability Commission.

They raised fifteen key points they felt the City needs to address, but he pointed out that, since the City does not have a system of committees, he does not know the next step to talk about some of those important items that may become part of an ordinance or legislation. He stressed that the volunteers who serve on these boards and commissions put in their time and effort, but he was concerned they will feel their time is not valid. Councilman Yanez stated that climate change is real and is affecting their climate, food supply, migration, and he felt the Sustainability Commission did a great job in their presentation; however, by not implementing some of these recommendations, he felt they are doing that Commission and those who serve on it a great disservice. He stated he would like feedback from his colleagues on how to go about doing this, and whether they need to schedule meetings to talk about specific items. He reiterated his concern that people will start dropping off of boards and commissions because they do not feel valued, and they will have trouble recruiting people because they see nothing is happening with the existing boards and commissions. He added that these are very smart, hard-working people currently serving, and the City needs their input.

Mayor Taylor questioned that, outside of what they are doing now, which is that anyone on any board or commission can speak at any meeting, and the Council can, at any time, ask for Administration to consider something and ask them to prepare a report. He questioned whether Councilman Yanez felt that process is not working.

Councilman Yanez replied affirmatively. He felt they need input from other Council members and people from the public. He referred back to the Sustainability Commission's report and the positive impact it could have on the City, and he felt it has to be more than just one Council member requesting a report.

Councilwoman Koski agreed that the Sustainability Commission has brought forth some great ideas, and she questioned how they can be implemented. She pointed

out the budget hearings are coming up, and she questioned whether it would be possible for Administration to schedule an additional meeting to discuss the fifteen key points they felt should be addressed, and whether that could be part of the budget process. She suggested that Administration could look at those fifteen points to determine what would work into their plan for the upcoming year, possibly by meeting with the committee. She felt they could prioritize those fifteen points. She cited the example of complaints that the City is running out of greenspace and suggested possibly they could purchase more land to protect the wildlife, adding that they may be able to get volunteer groups together to feed the deer in a certain area where they gather. She agreed with Councilman Yanez that if City Council does not pay attention to what their boards and commissions are recommending, they may lose those members. She would like Administration to look at those ideas and try to work them into their plans for the future.

Councilman Radtke appreciated the hard work done by the Sustainability Commission. They have presented City Council with their recommendations, but he reminded they are a recommending body and it is City Council that makes the policies. He pointed out that if anyone would like to implement some of those ideas, it takes a motion by a Council member, supported by three additional Council members, to pass it. He read the Sustainability Commission's report, and felt it is very good, but he stressed it is this Council who makes the decisions and determines what is in the best interest of the City. He is happy with the recommendations and will support the ones he feels are appropriate, but he stated he is not going to substitute their judgement for his judgement. He emphasized that Council is listening to the ideas and recommendations of the boards and commissions, but it is a "balancing act" of what everyone wants, what they can afford, and the Council's own policy preferences.

Councilwoman Schmidt questioned whether Councilman Yanez is referring only to the Sustainability Commission.

Councilman Yanez replied he is referring to all of the boards and commissions.

Councilwoman Schmidt stated their commissions on an average meet monthly, some more frequently and some less frequently. She pointed out that they never see the minutes from these meetings, so they do not know what is being discussed. She felt that would be a good start because there is a city liaison on every one of these committees and commissions. She would like to see the mindset of all of these committees, so if there is something that one or more Council members want to bring forward, they can have that discussion.

Councilman Yanez appreciated the comments of his colleagues, and he is not suggesting that the boards and commissions will take over the legislative process. He agreed that this is the legislative body, and City Administration does not work on its own, but it takes direction from Council. If a board or commission provides advice that Council feels should be taken up in one form or another, they need to discuss it. He does not feel it is an effective process for one person to bring it up, and the other six members have to "figure it out," especially when it is something major that changes how the City does business on an everyday basis. He reiterated his concern, based on conversations, that people serving on the boards and commissions get frustrated, do not feel like they are being heard, and may start walking away. He stressed he is looking at the betterment of the City as a whole.

Councilman Yanez requested, without objection, that City Administration provide City Council at the next meeting the total cost for all lawn care, based on their contracts, and that would include mowing and weed control.

Mayor Taylor noted there were no objections from Council.

Mayor Pro-Tem questioned whether Councilman Yanez is requesting the amount for all lawn care over a one-year period.

Councilman Yanez stated he would like the total cost of the contracts, regardless of whether they are for one year, two years, or more.

Mayor Taylor did not feel that would be palpable or relevant information, and suggested they provide a total of the amount spent annually.

Councilman Yanez agreed and changed his request to how much is spent annually. He also requested, without objection, that City Administration provide City Council with a proposal to develop and implement a recycling program for City operations and Parks & Recreation events. He requested this be provided within sixty days, and to be reported to City Council at their first meeting in May.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski stated the Macomb County Department of Public Works has a recycling program, overseen by Program Director Claudette Wisniuk, and she suggested that possibly Ms. Wisniuk could help.

Mayor Taylor inquired as to whether Mr. Vanderpool needs any clarification on the recycling request.

Mr. Vanderpool replied to inquiry that the direction on the recycling is clear, and when they report back, they will highlight the recycling program they currently have in place for City facilities, as well as areas where they feel it can be expanded, along with the potential cost and any logistical issues.

Mayor Taylor inquired as to whether Mr. Vanderpool needs any further clarification on the lawn care costs.

Mr. Vanderpool noted that he and Councilman Yanez have spent some time talking about this issue, and he shares some of his concerns on the topic. He felt they can do a better job of having the commissions report back to City Council on a regular basis. They can start with meeting minutes right away, and although not all of the boards do formal minutes, they can come up with meaningful updates to provide City Council via notes/summaries. He agreed with Councilwoman Koski's comments that they had some wonderful presentations from the African American Coalition, the CommUNITY Alliance, and the Sustainability Commission, but he pointed out those are just three of their incredibly valuable commissions. He agreed it would be good to hear from all of them throughout the year, and he assured they can schedule those presentations for a chair or designated member to make a presentation at a Council meeting to provide updates and major initiatives. He felt that will give them the ability to better communicate the many

initiatives the City is implementing. He provided some examples of those many initiatives, including their robust, non-motorized transportation plan, the upcoming public hearing to discuss acquiring additional open space in the southwest quadrant of the City, with both of those falling under the auspices of sustainability. They are looking at the possibility of community gardens using ARPA funds, extending bike/hike trail certification, LEED certification of new buildings, universal recycling, and the PACE program which provides funding to homeowners who are unable to make energy efficiency improvements on their own. He informed that the Tree Preservation Ordinance will be coming before Council, and this is an initiative of the Sustainability Commission. He stressed that a lot of what the Sustainability Commission is looking at studying, even in short term, is being implemented in one way, shape, or form. He suggested that their doing a better job of communicating and expounding on that will help, although he cautioned that some of the initiatives take years to implement, such as increasing their tree canopy from 15 percent to 30 percent. He noted that Juneteenth Day and PRIDE Day came out of the Youth Advisory Board and CommUNITY Alliance, and this shows that City Council is listening to their boards and commissions to implement a lot of their ideas. He emphasized that the City had more Black History programming through the Library than they have ever had, and it is because of the efforts of the African American Coalition. They have made great advances through the Historical Commission in expanding the museum at the Upton Center and creating videos of the City's historic areas and cemeteries. Mr. Vanderpool confirmed that these boards and commissions are of great value to the City and providing great advice. He concluded by stating that he and Councilman Yanez discussed having a more meaningful follow-up to their Strategic Planning, how they can prioritize the ideas, and whether there is consensus on City Council to implement them. He stated the thought is to have a follow-up Strategic Planning meeting in June or July where they can look at the progress and highlight areas where they need better direction from City Council

on some of the ideas brought up. He stated the list of action items will be going out to City Council this Thursday, and once they have a chance to review it, they can talk about how to prioritize the list and devote the resources necessary to get it done. He felt they can satisfy the needs of Council by giving this some more thought.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski reminded that on Friday, March 11, 2022, the Cultural Exchange will be held, and although the event was held last year, it was outdoors at the Farmer's Market Pavillion, so this year they will be back inside at the Community Center. She urged everyone to attend and added that they will be highlighting some of their Ukrainian neighbors in Warren. She stressed this is an opportunity to support all of the City's diversity, but especially to their Ukrainian families.

Mayor Taylor would like to request, with Council's consent, that City Administration create a group of administrators, or task force, to study the issue of marijuana and the potential for marijuana businesses in the City of Sterling Heights. He pointed out the general practice is to request City Administration to prepare an ordinance, it comes back to Council, and they vote on it. He does not feel that would be productive in this case because a topic such as this is controversial and touches on a number of different departments. Location of such businesses would be a question for which the City Planner would have expertise. They need to look at the impact on traffic, crime, movement of people and vehicles, non-motorized movement, areas where it would be better-suited or not better-suited, and Mayor Taylor felt the Police Chief would be valuable to provide this type of information. They need to look at the application process and how a successful applicant is chosen, and there are a number of factors other cities use, so he felt the City Clerk would be involved in that process should something be implemented, and he would like her to sit on the task force. He explained that many other cities have gotten involved in this, although many have not been able to avoid the pitfalls that he would like to see the City of Sterling Heights avoid. He

felt the City Attorney is knowledgeable about that and has familiarity with what is taking place in other cities, so he would be someone would be of great help on the task force. He commented that there is a potential for increased revenue, but there is also a potential for decreased revenue, so he would like to know how this would impact the other businesses in the City of Sterling Heights. He felt their Economic Development Advisor Luke Bonner would be able to help provide information in that regard. He envisioned a group of administrators, comprised of City officials (not elected officials) and professionals in the City of Sterling Heights who are going to be directly responsible for implementing an ordinance and/or not implementing it, and the department heads who this will most closely affect, work together to gather information, determine feasibility, and report back to City Council with information. They may have to go hold forums, meet with focus groups, residents, business owners, stakeholders, engage consultants, but that would be up to the administration. He would like it to be untainted because of political processes, and this is his recommendation. He welcomed feedback, but he hoped somewhere between three to six months would give City Administration enough time to form such a task force group. He reiterated he would like Administration to do this outside of the political process. He hoped they could receive a report back that provides guidance to City Council in deciding in what to do with that information.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski requested clarification that they are not asking Administration to gather this information with the intent of putting together an ordinance, but rather it is only an information-gathering report back to Council.

Mayor Taylor clarified that he has made no secret that he feels this is something City Council should consider; however, he is not asking that the City gather the information and provide Council with all of the reasons why they should pass an ordinance to allow marijuana businesses in Sterling Heights. He stressed it should be untainted, with independent people looking at this from a feasibility standpoint, gathering that information, and presenting it to City Council without

any preconceived ideas as to what their angle should be. He emphasized he wants an honest report as to why it might work and be great, or why it might not work and the anticipated pitfalls.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski stated that sounds reasonable to her.

Councilwoman Schmidt expressed concern that what is being asked of Administration is extremely time-consuming. She questioned whether hiring a consultant should be part of this. She asked Mr. Vanderpool as to his thoughts about the directors or administrators having the time to do this fact-finding, and whether he feels three to six months is reasonable.

Mr. Vanderpool replied that he feels they would definitely need the guidance of a consultant, which would be someone who has significant experience in working with other communities through a similar process. He felt without a consultant, it would be tough to meet the requested timeframe. That consultant would also help with organizing the community engagement process, gathering feedback, holding forums, engaging with businesses and other entities, etc. He would respectfully request that the City Council allow them to report back in thirty days as to the task force structure, the scope of service they will be looking at over the next three to six months, and estimated cost of a consultant, which would require incorporation into the budget or a budget amendment. He pointed out if they are all onboard with this structure, they can move forward and execute the scope of service.

Councilwoman Schmidt stated she would be more comfortable getting that information before going forward with the task force.

Mayor Taylor agreed that is fair, adding that he is just giving one recommendation. He would like to get something started. He agreed having a consultant who already has the data would save the department heads a lot of time trying to gather that information. He felt Councilwoman Schmidt's suggestion is great, and he added he is open to it.

Councilwoman Schmidt suggested if Council members could reach out to Mr. Vanderpool to give some of their ideas of what they would be looking for in the task force information that may be helpful.

Mayor Taylor agreed that is his goal. He would like to be deliberate and get as much information as possible so they can make a good decision about whether this is something that needs to be pursued.

Councilwoman Ziarko explained she would like to say she agrees with Mayor Taylor, but she stated she does not agree. She has been doing research from other cities throughout the state about what is happening with bringing marijuana dispensaries and related businesses into those communities, and she has yet to have anyone tell her it was a positive movement. She noted in some cases, the communities were blindsided and ended up doing it because of a loophole. She stated she would be disingenuous if she voted to go ahead with this, when she knows that she would vote no. She stressed she does not want it in the City and has made it clear she does not want it in their community. She felt the few people getting pressured about doing this are those who want to open the businesses here in Sterling Heights, although some of those people do not even live in this city. She added the only people she hears from regarding this are the people who do not want it. She stated her answer will be no, and she will not change her mind. She clarified that she is not telling people not to use it, because it is legal and they can use it and even grow it legally, but she does not want it being grown or sold in this community.

Councilman Yanez explained that the City of Gaylord did this type of study in three months with a combined panel of citizens, business owners, and city leaders, including their police chief. He is not aware of anyone who does consulting for this, adding that the law has only been implemented in the last two years. He questioned where they would find such a consultant and suggested they can hire an attorney to do the research. He felt this can be done in a short amount of time, and he cited the model that the City of Gaylord used. He supports Mayor Taylor's

suggestion and pointed out it is just fact-finding at this time. He does not want to spend a lot of money, but agreed they need answers to some of the questions Mayor Taylor raised because he was confident they are many of the same questions the citizens will ask.

Mayor Taylor requested that Councilman Yanez provide the information that Gaylord used in their study, which would be helpful.

Councilman Yanez agreed he would do so.

Councilwoman Koski did not believe they need to hire a consultant. She pointed out that they have a City Attorney whom she believed could provide a great deal of information. She believed there are some sessions the Michigan Municipal League (MML) is holding in their upcoming conference that have to do with marijuana, and she was confident they could get information from the MML. She questioned whether Lansing has records as to what has taken place over the last few years. She does not feel she would want to hire money to hire a consultant to do this and felt the City is capable of doing this inhouse with the information the City Attorney could make available.

Councilman Radtke stated the Fire Chief should be on the task force. He looks forward to the report, and felt it is time to dig in on this. He talked to the mayor of Hazel Park, who told him they were very much in favor of the marijuana business and were one of the first communities to develop an ordinance for it. He understood some of the concerns, and he hopes the report will answer them.

Mayor Taylor asked Mr. Vanderpool if he has clear direction.

Mr. Vanderpool stated it might be helpful to have a vote. He believes there was some disagreement by a couple of members on whether to proceed with a task force, although he believes there is consensus.

Mayor Taylor understood there was only one strong "no" in terms of proceeding, and there were a couple who suggested a consultant. He felt that over the course of the next thirty days, Mr. Vanderpool would make a recommendation for City Council in terms of what the task force might look like, their objective and scope

of work, and whether or not he recommends the use of a consultant. He would come back with this information in thirty days to get approval from the City Council.

Mr. Vanderpool stated that is his understanding of the request, and he felt it is a fair request.

Councilwoman Schmidt clarified her earlier comment that she does not necessarily mean that the City needs a consultant, but she felt putting pressure on Administration to get this done in three months, when they have other work they do on a day-to-day basis, could be difficult. She noted there is fact-finding and questions to be answered, and although she does not feel it is specifically necessary to hire a consultant, she does not want Administration and the various departments to become bogged down.

Mayor Taylor suggested that Mr. Vanderpool's report back to City Council in thirty days could include a recommendation as to a timeline to balance the workflow with the rest of the directors so it does not become too onerous on them.

Mr. Vanderpool agreed, stating they can come back with a couple of options, possibly one being a more expedited process with a consultant. Another option is to do it inhouse, and he emphasized the City has the capability and expertise to do this internally, so he is not suggesting they do not go that route. He agreed it is a matter of allocating resources, especially in light of the other initiatives they are working to implement. He felt the direction is clear and stated they will report back with a couple of options, perhaps with a preferred option. He concluded that they should have some good information to consider.

13. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business.

14. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

15. CLOSED SESSION PERMITTED UNDER ACT 267 OF 1976

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

16. ADJOURN

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

Yes: All. The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

MELANIE D. RYSKA, City Clerk