

Observer Report
Council or Committee: City Council

Date: December 10, 2007

Observer: Carol Mullins

Aldermen Absent/Present: Mayor and all aldermen

Staff Present: All Dept heads: Police Chief, Berkowsky, Terry, (his last meeting before retirement 12/31/07) Wolinski, Dave Jennings, Budget staff from City (don't know names), Max Rubin, Herb Hill, Judy Aiello, and Julia Carroll

Media Present: Bob Seidenberg (Review), Bill Smith (Evanston Now?), Mary Gavin (Roundtable)

Citizens Present: A few speaking about extension of West Evanston TIF, one addressing Roundtable editorial, chastising Council for failure to adhere to open meetings act, asking that minutes be made public, a couple speakers opposed to the Blue light phones on private property, a couple about funding staff for Field House at Mason Park, another talking about snow removal in the 5th ward, perennial Junad Rizki speaking about NICOR, Wilmette sewers and taxes.

Meeting Began: 8:35 PM

Agenda: Public Hearing on West Evanston TIF, which was approved. Speakers (Ester and Giles) are concerned that there is not sufficient affordable housing, particularly rental units. A few items from the Consent Agenda were pulled out for discussion: one was the 8-1 vote (Bernstein voted nay) on the blue light phones. In addition to El stops, there will be four blue light phones, 2 on NU property and 2 on private property. One has been removed from Orrington/Noyes to Sherman/Emerson. The motion passed after a lot of discussion about prevention of crime and Bernstein's passionate comment about the illusion of safety, not real safety.

Reports of the Standing Committees:

City is about to embark into a three year agreement with a company that will collect parking ticket fees. This was tentatively accepted, but will be brought back after further negotiation in January. This company has new software technology to find scofflaws and will guarantee an 82% collection rate from our current 78% for the first year. Baptiste asked for the entire three years to have a guarantee. (that's reason to bring it back)

Currently there is an outstanding amount of 2 million, one hundred thousand dollars in unpaid tickets. (see Rainey at call of the wards) Hansen asked for a suspension of the rules to ask for a vote on the 93 day extension of the moratorium on downtown building application. The Council did not vote for the suspension, which means moratorium ended on Tuesday, December 11th.

Bernstein asked Hill for legal opinion about motion at public meeting to open minutes of executive session. Hill was up and down to discuss this until Rainey remarked that he was legal counsel, not the 10th alderman. Also discussed was the closing and possible reopening of Luciano's before their liquor license expires at the end of January. That will

be tabled for further discussion until February. A new restaurant, Red Mango will open at 809 Davis. I presume the number of liquor licenses is at issue here.

Calling of the Wards: With the exception of one alderman, all expressed appreciation to Jay Terry; Director of Health and Human Services, who is retiring early after 18 ½ years on December 31, 2007. He received a standing ovation. Many mentioned the passing of Rev. Norwood for whom service will be held on Thursday, December 13th.

Bernstein: congrats to Jay, he is one of the “Good”, change is difficult and Bernstein is not happy with the changes at the city;

Holmes: Rev Norwood is her pastor, sad passing, memorial Thursday, LWV Essay contest very interesting;

Moran: vote for moratorium for downtown; affordable housing in 5th ward is not dead;

Tisdahl and Hanson: good young people on youth council, which had dinner at the Civic Center before the meeting, Hanson mentioned the Essay Contest and her role as judge. She was most impressed with the essays;

Rainey: Many of the unpaid parking tickets are on cars in her ward, not hard to find these people; her neighborhood is a crime scene, 8-12 break-ins east of Ridge, “something has to be done”. “I am looking at and talking to the Police Chief - station police cars on every corner if necessary. Don’t say this is about leaving windows open, these people are having doors broken down. Store fronts on Howard Street are criminal also; counterfeit DVDs, music and stolen goods there. Building in TIF areas should not sell to religious organizations that will take the property off the tax rolls. She asked that P&D examine requests for religious use of the property. The intent of the TIF is to improve for commercial purposes.

The public meeting was adjourned about 10:40PM to be followed by Executive session.