

## **City Council Meeting, Monday February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2007**

Betty Papangelis, Observer, filed the following report:

The meeting, scheduled for 8:30 p.m., began at 9:20 p.m. All aldermen were present, as well as the City Manager, City Clerk, and all department heads. Mayor Lorraine Morton was absent, due to death of her sister. Alderman Melissa Wynne, 3<sup>rd</sup> ward, served as Mayor protem.

Members of the media present were Bob Seidenberg of the Evanston Review, Bill Smith of the RoundTable, and students from the Daily Northwestern. The meeting was filmed by City Channel 16. A few citizens were present.

Mayor protem Wynne expressed the whole Council's condolences to the Mayor, and announced that visitation and service would be at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baptist Church, 1717 Benson Street at 7:30 p. m. Tuesday, February 27<sup>th</sup>.

City Clerk announced that the Evanston election would be on April 17<sup>th</sup> (some citizens were confused over the Chicago elections which are tomorrow).

### **Citizens Comments:**

Timothy Schoolmaster, a member of the Police Pension Board, reminded the Council that the Police and Fireman's Pensions were seriously underfunded in the proposed budget (110 million dollars) and that the Pension Board has given the City Manager and Finance Director Matt Grady 90 days to come up with a workable funding policy.

Junad Rizki , a frequent Citizen Commentator, took issue with a recent article in The Evanston Review that compared Evanston with Winnetka in regard to affordable housing. He proposed doing away with affordable housing funds, and only providing our police with affordable housing units.

### **Action:**

Alderman Moran presented The Consent Agenda for Council approval (Passed 9-0)

Alderman Wollin, Chair of A & P W Committee, proposed a transfer of \$ 300,000 to the fleet fund. Alderman Rainey took issue with this, chastising the City Manager and Staff for not bringing this to her attention sooner. Much discussion. Vote: 8 –1 for the transfer. An ordinance was introduced, and rules were suspended in order to approve the number of liquor licences from 23 – 24 (Approved 9 – 0)

Alderman Jean Baptiste, Chair of the Planning and Development Committee, announced that the Committee had been given an Affordable Housing Fund Proposal by the Housing Commission, and that

it would be reviewed and discussed by the Committee. He also announced that an Inclusionary Housing Ordinance will be discussed and presented to the Council at the meeting on March 12<sup>th</sup>.

And finally Alderman Jean Baptiste introduced an extension of the Moratorium on building projects on Central Street (2200 Central – Ashland streets). The Moratorium extension will be 120 days.

The 2007 – 2008 City Budget was presented for discussion and approval. There was considerable discussion; started by Alderman Rainey who felt the staff made a calculation mistake with the State Sales Tax, and Home Rule Sales Tax (underestimating the Home Rule State Tax portion). Eventually Alderman Rainey proposed that the Home Rule Sales Tax be increased to \$6,300,000 from 5,800,000. Her motion was carried 5 – 4.

There was another proposal by Alderman Rainey to transfer funds from the Water Fund to reduce the Tax Levy. The City Manager explained that it was not sound practice to use that kind of funding for operating costs. There was a motion to eliminate such a transfer, which won 7 – 2 (Rainey/Hanson).

There was additional discussion and a proposal by Alderman Hansen, to transfer funds from the General Fund Surplus.. Motion failed 6 – 3.

Alderman Rainey questioned the revenue from parking fines, and there was another back and forth discussion with the staff.

Finally the budget was passed 9 – 0, with great sighs of relief.

Alderman Rainey passed to the staff reports on 20 nearby communities, and how they handle health insurance for their staff. She felt we could learn a lot, and perhaps decrease our heavy insurance costs.

### **Call of the Wards:**

Every Alderman expressed condolences to the Mayor on the death of her sister; most thanked Northwestern University for its contribution of \$ 50,000 towards the cost of refurbishing the Children's section of the Library. In addition:

Alderman Bernstein (2<sup>nd</sup> Ward) apologized for the fact that the advisory referendum on the Civic Center had the figure of 31 million for refurbishing, and this was incorrect. The correct figure is 20 million, but there is no way to change it now.

Alderman Holmes (5<sup>th</sup> Ward) praised the African-American Achievement Awards program, recently held at ETHS. And she invited all alderman and citizens to the Part 2 Session on Partnering for a Safe Evanston (Saturday am March 4<sup>th</sup>.)

Alderman Moran (6<sup>th</sup> Ward) expressed gratitude to the City Manager and the staff for the diligent budget presentation. The new budget has a 3.35% increase, a remarkably small increase, all matters considered. He announced a ward meeting, to continue discussion on Central Street Development, would be held tomorrow evening (Tuesday February 27<sup>th</sup>.) in the Board Room from 6 to 9pm

Alderman Tisdahl (7<sup>th</sup> Ward) said that everyone else had already expressed her thoughts.

Alderman Rainey (8<sup>th</sup> Ward) thanked Alderman Wynne for a good job as mayor protem, and spoke of 2 major developments occurring in her ward – The Oakton Project (across from Home Depot) and a new condo at Ridge and Dobson.

Alderman Hanson (9<sup>th</sup> Ward) announced a ward meeting, to present the city budget, on March 6<sup>th</sup> at the Levy Center.

Alderman Wollin (1<sup>st</sup> Ward) hoped that Northwestern's \$ 50,000 contribution to the Library might signal a new relationship between the City and Northwestern.

Alderman Jean Baptiste (2<sup>nd</sup> Ward) offered congratulations to the new finance director (Mr. Casey) and thanked citizen Gerald Gordon for his oversight of the budget, and his helpful suggestions.

Alderman Melissa Wynne (3<sup>rd</sup> Ward) remarked that the 3.35% tax levy on this year's budget was the lowest in her memory during her nine years on the Council.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:55 p.m