

Observer Report Form

Council or Committee: City Council

Date: 6/28/10

Observer: Sue Calder

Aldermen Present/Absent: All there.

Staff Present: Department heads (left as their issues were handled), legal staff.

Media Present: Bob Seidenberg, looked like two from NU.

Meeting Began. 7:00 pm

Meeting Ended: 11 p.m.

No. of Citizens in Attendance: About 50 – a lot of folks on the library. Didn't see anyone who lasted for the Grandmother's tot lot which was the last item on the agenda.

Citizen Comment Sharon Eckersoll was very angry at the proposed discussion of the Assessor's budget. Two spoke on the new hours at the food outlet at 555 Howard and said they could live with the new hours (7 – 7 on all days, but they would continue to monitor the activities. One young woman spoke on branch libraries, one on Grandmothers' tot lot, Junad on the budget, and moi on support of the YMCA public art exhibit for the Emerson St. Y.

Significant Discussions, Action Taken

Branch Libraries Karen Terry, chair of the board, described the board's look at making the branches sustainable. Four approaches were outlined: a mixture of public/private funds, library friends, special service area taxing, and a separate library district. She pointed out that thus far

the Friends of the Library have raised \$125,000 toward their goal of \$160,000 (tho' no one could quite recall if they were charged with that or \$168,000). Karen did an outstanding job as she was ruthlessly grilled by Burris and Rainey but kept to her script when they tried to add words to her statement (for instance, she never mentioned raising taxes tho admitted that SSA probably would increase taxes for those citizens), but Burris said any of these might raise taxes. She referred all fund-raising efforts to the Friends' presentation as that wasn't what she was there to discuss despite many questions on the money. Jean-Baptiste reminded the Council that this was a status hearing on the progress of raising money and not a time to plan for the long-term future. Laurie Keenan (sp?), VP of the Friends said they were looking into how to make the branch libraries more sustainable; they have looked to the West Side and there are reading rooms at Foster School and Robert Crown for kids to participate in the reading game this summer; the goal of \$160,000 has, in essence, been reached with the \$125,000 in donations (regular fund raising letters, bake sales, lemonade stands, etc), taking \$25,000 from renovating the branch libraries and \$25,000 from book sales; they are now a 501 – c- 3 and raised \$18,000 in four days from one letter; they are exploring partnering for space with the IL Dept. of Employment Services (supported by Sen. Schoenberg and which is a pass through from the Feds in terms of funding), and the Family Room, perhaps others. Jeff Smith stated that ½ of libraries in IL are separate taxing bodies, some have the private / public partnerships, 2/3 of Evanston residents live close to the branch libraries and many would go to Skokie or Wilmette rather than to the main branch. Jean-Baptiste stated that since they have met the charge of money, the question of closing the libraries on August 31 is moot. Fiske wondered about the location of the South Branch – Wally will rework the lease and stay put until all options are completed especially looking at next year's budget. Fiske stated that the libraries are an economic generator and could be helpful for Main St. location. Rainey asked if anyone had been to an unemployment office (rather derisively), (about a dozen raised their hands) and didn't think there should be a partnership with IDES. There was a vote to continue to keep the branches open since they had met the challenge; Holmes and Burris voted against saying that the \$160,000 might not cover all costs. (9pm)

Convenience Store at 555 Howard – The hours were changed to 7-7 daily since there was a threat of a lawsuit if they were shortened. However, it was recommended that if P&D changes a Zoning Board of Appeal recommendation there should be a public hearing. Rainey pointed out that she had recently visited and there were two prostitutes in the parking lot and they were selling drugs inside. Gang members hang shoes from the utility lines to indicate they are in business and spray paint the exterior to mark their territory. The new hours will be monitored for 90 days and then a report made.

There was a lot of discussion about whether Giordano's, which is moving to 1527 Sherman, could have outdoor dining with service ending at 10 on weekdays and 11 on weekends or whether the seating should stop at those hours. (Shades of Los Palmas from last year.) No one could find the notes from P&D over this discussion and the owner was not there. Fiske moved to say it was seating (i.e. the food would be whisked away at 10 and perhaps taken inside), which

was defeated and the motion to make it service passed. Wilson pointed out that someone could order prior to 10 but the food would have to be delivered prior to 10 as well.

Township Budget - Pat was not there (Holmes said she was out of town with her ailing mother) so the ED had to defend the budget. Rainey had a number of questions on line items which the ED could only say that the Supervisor put the number in and she didn't know what the contracts would be used for. The Assessor's budget increased as she would like to hire 1.5 more staff since this is a reassessment year – tho' that might only be hot for about a month. But Bonnie is there almost every day from 12 – 4:30 to help Darnell and she shouldn't be putting so much time in. The additional staff would be somewhat the same as before the Council cut Eckersoll's budget. There was a motion to suspend the rules so they could approve the budget but there were 3 nays and a suspension needs to be unanimous. What to do?? Wally and staff figured out that they could pass a four-month budget (April through July) at FY10 amounts which would meet state law and then come back to it at the July meeting. That passed.

Grandmother's Tot Lot Burris objected to taking this property off the tax rolls and instead build a tot lot on Robert Crown property which is 1.5 blocks away. She stated that they all ran on platforms on fiscal conservancy and they are continually giving money away. The property involved has a burned down house, four others near by are in foreclosure and a tot lot may help to stabilize the neighborhood. Wilson and Burris voted against the motion.

Call of the Wards

Grover noted the success of the Ricky Birdsong / YWCA event.

Rainey described a particularly repulsive case of animal cruelty and that the first and second time the case was in court, the arresting officer didn't show so the case was automatically dismissed. The judge was quite angry and Rainey wanted to know how many other times we don't have the officer in court. She recommended that when P&D recommended action against the recommendation of the Zoning Board of Appeals that there should be a public hearing on the new language.

Wynne urged the City to find some way to enforce the no leaf blower ordinance (May – Oct.). Perhaps issue citations to the home owner who employs the company, certainly not to fine the users of the leaf blowers – and they should be covered under OSHA since few wear ear covers.

League Action

The Library presentations were excellent, the Council was difficult in their handling of the facts presented to them. The 2-hour presentation and discussion should not have occurred on such a

full agenda night, perhaps a special meeting. Jean-Baptiste mentioned that the process for approving the Township budget was out of whack; the budget had been presented to Human Services in March so why couldn't it come to Council sooner than the last minute. a