

CITY OF LAWRENCE
Common Council
March 1, 2021
Regular Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: None

MEMBERS BY ZOOM: Lisa Chavis, Tom Shevlot, Sherron Freeman, William Tyrrell Giles, Lauren Russel, Maria Rusomaroff, Deborah Whitfield, Rick Wells and Shawn Denney

ALSO BY ZOOM: Clerk Kathleen Walton, Attorney Kristina Wheeler (Bose McKinney & Evans LLP), Ray Cox, Annelisse Williams and Paul Okesen (Garmong Construction Services)

ALSO PRESENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Mayor Collier, Fire Chief Batalis and several firefighters

STAFF BY ZOOM: Police Chief Hofmann, Deputy Police Chief Bigsbee and Director of Engineering Venugopalan

Council President Lisa Chavis called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and announced a quorum was present.

COMMENTS OF COUNCIL MEMBERS: Councilor Freeman recognized the involvement of all those who played a role in putting together the Black History Celebration Program and for all those who attended virtually. She specifically thanked Daniel Beyer for his work in collecting the virtual materials and for putting them all together. In a separate matter, she noted that potholes are beginning to pop up. She cited examples near the La Hacienda Restaurant and Finance Center on 56th Street and Post Road just past the Lawrence Police Station. She went on to express support of a new fire station but questioned if Station #40 could be made the made hub since it is now used only for ambulances. Councilor Rusomaroff requested additional LPD patrols in the Winding Ridge area to address the problems of speeders and intruders. Her concern is providing safety and protecting against break-ins. With a “saddened heart”, Councilor Giles reported a “horrific crime” in his district. He noted that the Lawrence Police Department is working hard to solve this case. He called on measures to get information and safety tips out on Facebook and “The Lift” to keep similar tragedies from happening in the future. Following on comments from Councilor Freeman, he asked about how a person reports potholes they encounter. Councilor Russel thanked the Lawrence Fire Department for their hard work in responding to a fire in her district. Councilor Shevlot expressed condolences to Police Chief Hofmann on the recent passing of his father.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Councilor Freeman moved to approve the minutes of the regular meetings on February 1, 2021 and February 17, 2021. Councilor Russel seconded the motion. By a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF VOUCHERS 3-1-21: Councilor Whitfield moved to approve Invoices [for vendors] as presented today [for \$301,633.93]. Councilor Rusomaroff seconded the motion. By a roll call vote, the motion to approve the vouchers carried unanimously.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES: Councilor Denney reviewed the discussion from the Administration, Budget and Finance Committee on Resolution No. 2, 2021.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: Resolution No. 2, 2021, approving a form of lease and taking other actions regarding the proposed lease (new fire station), was read only by title by Clerk Walton. During a subsequent discussion of the resolution, the following points were presented:

- Councilor Chavis reported that she had received a list of more than 20 questions from the other councilors.
- While the majority of councilors are in support of a new station #38, a lot of those questions focus on financial matters. Those questions should be addressed before the council votes on the resolution.
- Councilor Chavis assigned Resolution No. 2, 2021 for consideration to the Committee of the Whole to gather at 5:15 p.m. on March 17, 2021 before the regular mid-month meeting.
- Councilor Shevlot reminded everyone that the resolution has passed out of the Finance Committee and is part of the process necessary for the resolution to be approved and other meetings scheduled. Essentially, the resolution must pass or the process dies. Councilor Chavis responded and clarified that this step doesn't stop the process but allows all councilors to be involved.
- Councilor Giles noted that approval of the resolution allows for the lease process to move forward and for the use of the lowest-bid process.
- Councilor Russel suggested that the Fire Department should explain why, from their perspective, the new building is necessary.

NEW BUSINESS: Proposal No. 2, 2021, establishing a 2021 budget for the City of Lawrence Storm Water Management District, was introduced and read only by title by Clerk Walton. Councilor Chavis assigned Proposal No. 2, 2021 to the Administration, Budget and Finance Committee that will meet on April 5, 2021 at 6 p.m.

ADMINISTRATION COMMENTS: Director of Engineering Venugopalan presented an update on changes to the permit process that took effect on January 1, 2021. A significant change enables online permitting and has produced positive feedback.

Mayor Collier expressed frustration with the new fire station process. He noted that the process remains at the first step and that a delay in voting pushes back the process. The questions from the council reached him shortly before the meeting began and that there was no time to answer those questions before the meeting. Consequently, he will need more time before the next meeting. He reminded everyone that delays drive up the expenses and encouraged the council either to move forward or stop the project.

Councilor Chavis thanked the Mayor for his comments. She reviewed the time line that begins with the presentation the council received in December 2020. The first meeting on the resolution took place in February; tonight was only the second meeting on this matter. There is no effort to delay the project especially since the majority of the council is in full support of a new fire station.

Fire Chief Batalis then spoke about the project:

- While some believe that Station #40 is centrally located, it is not. Geographic locations are evaluated based on mutual aid agreements within Marion County. The dispatching of

apparatus is based on computerized management of station locations throughout the county.

- Station #40 contains a major fire training facility as well as the Ivy Tech Training School. Building an entirely new training facility is more expensive than building a new station.
- This project, like all others, is focused on building for the future.
- Response times for runs made into the former Fort Benjamin Harrison are consistently below national response times. In every case the apparatus closest to an incident gets dispatched.
- Station #38 is 35 years old; structurally unsound; and does not meet operational requirements.
- He is frustrated that the resolution has passed out of the Finance Committee but has gone no further.

In response, Councilor Chavis said the councilors are elected to serve the community and that both constituents and councilors have questions. She expressed appreciation to Fire Chief Batalis for setting the record straight. She concluded by expressing her intent to get the questions answered and then to move forward.

CITIZENS COMMENTS: None

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 7:04 p.m., by the unanimous vote of the Council.

Lisa Chavis, President

Kathleen A. Walton, Clerk

These minutes are not intended to be verbatim. They are a summary of discussions held, with the exception of the motions. An audiotape is made which provides a detailed record.