

COUNCIL MINUTES

JANUARY 19, 2021

Via Zoom

7:00 P.M.

President Ellington called the meeting to order

ROLL CALL – Mr. Blake, Mr. Bubb, Mr. Fennell,
Ms. Hall, Mr. Harris, Mr. Labutis, Mr. Lang, Mr. Marmie, Mr. Rath, Mr. Barker

INVOCATION – Mr. Labutis

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE- President Ellington

CAUCUS

MINUTES of January 4, 2021 - Motion by to approve the January 4, 2021 Newark City Council Minutes as presented and the reading be dispensed with in view of the fact each member of Council has received written summary of same, second by **Motion to approve by Mr. Labutis , second by Mr. Barker , carried by acclamation**

APPOINTMENTS

There are none this evening

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES

Finance – **no objections, received and filed**

Service – **no objections, received and filed**

REPORTS FROM CITY OFFICIAL

City Auditor, Stephen E. Johnson – Operating report for period ending December 31, 2020

COMMUNICATIONS

River Road Project Opposition: Jerry Mazik, Allison Fitzenreiter, Mourad Abdelmessih, Allison Buerkel, Joseph Kurzawa, Betsey Hampton, Bobbi Jo Finley, Breanna Douglass, Suzanne McMillan, Roman Martorell, Tom & Jes Padgett, Jay Knudsen, Jacqueline Tudor, Pastor Jeff Holman, Doug & Debbie Russell, Jeff Salyer, Michelle and Brian Perlstein, Vanessa Copley, Maris Losh, John Stretton & Amy Martin, Heather Waits, Drew Roberts

Park National Bank – Newark Memorial Bld/Cedar Hill Cemetery Trust Statement

COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

Steven Smith, 237 Violet Ct.- I saw recently that the Family Dollar property on East main St., which had been slated to be a low barrier shelter for homeless is instead going to be used as a

thrift store for the St. Vincent DePaul organization. I was very disappointed to see that, we had extensive meetings last spring and it was the general consensus of that group that a low barrier shelter for the homeless is what's needed. The thrift store doesn't really fulfill that need or the needs that the community has. It's a very disappointing outcome and particularly when there have been a number of studies that you can find on a very easy web search that show that providing shelter for the homeless saves the community money in reduced medical cost to the community, reduced policing and services that are not used because they have shelter. In the Advocate article there was a comment quoted by Jeff Hall saying that as far as the low barrier shelter, we need to move quickly but we need to do the right moves. Well, yes but we also just need to move. It's January now, there is a great need in this community for that sort of service. I don't see that need being met.

Rachelle Bolen-Smith, 237 Violet Ct.- Regarding the low barrier shelter, we had attended all of the meetings when they were going through the needs assessment and it was agreed by most of the people there that this was imperative, including United Way. Again, very disappointed that the city is not following up on this we are in a critical need with more and more people losing jobs and therefore more people will be losing their housing and other needs. This is not going to give them access to the food they need and all sorts of other access. This is imperative that we move on this, it's not going to change and it's not going to be less in three years. I just don't understand why the city is avoiding this responsibility. This is going to get worse before it gets better. I don't know if you can explain to me why, after discussing with United Way they're still of the opinion there is a great need for a facility and I see the city not doing anything to correct this situation.

President Ellington – I understand your concern and I'm sure there will be some comments in the Miscellaneous Section so hang on, but you do understand the city does not own that building, the city was just part of the study, but I'm sure some folks will be commenting, so we'll go on from there.

ORDINANCES ON SECOND READING

No Ordinances on 2nd Reading

ORDINANCES ON FIRST READING

No Ordinances on 1st Reading

RESOLUTIONS ON SECOND READING

By: Mr. Marmie

20-96 A RESOLUTION APPROPRIATING MONIES FOR CURRENT EXPENSES OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

Motion to adopt by Mr. Marmie, second by Mr. Bubb, passed 10-0

RESOLUTIONS ON FIRST READING

By: Mr. Marmie

21-01 Expedite APPROPRIATING MONIES FOR THE CURRENT EXPENSES OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

Motion by Mr. Marmie to waive the 2 day reading rule, second by Mr. Bubb, passed 10-0
Motion by Mr. Marmie to adopt, second by Mr. Bubb, passed 10-0

By: Mr. Rath

21-02 A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SERVICE TO ADVERTISE FOR BIDS AND ENTER INTO CONTRACTS, SUBJECT TO THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS, FOR VARIOUS CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS.

to be held for 2 weeks for a second reading

By: Mr. Rath

21-03 A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SERVICE TO ADVERTISE FOR BIDS AND ENTER INTO CONTRACT FOR CERTAIN ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES FOR VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS OF THE CITY OF NEWARK, OHIO, FOR 2021.

to be held for 2 weeks for a second reading

COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS

Rachelle Bolen-Smith, 237 Violet Ct.- I wanted to say that I do realize that the city itself does not own the building on Main Street, however that does not mean that the city does not have a responsibility towards its homeless and we still need to come up with a way of providing this essential need for housing and food and education. The city still does have very much a responsibility for this and I think that we do need to discuss it.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mayor Hall – As we're moving into the vaccine stage of COVID I want everyone to keep in mind that there is quite a bit of shortage of vaccine coming into the State and trickling down into our county. As we've commented before our first responders have done an outstanding job through this, I also don't want to leave out the hospital and our health department. The Licking County Health Department is doing a tremendous job as is the hospital and now they're starting to do the vaccines, the first stage was people who meet certain categories including age 80 or above. I do know there's a hotline set up now, it's open from 9-3. Most people probably know that by now. I know it's tuff getting through and like anything else it takes some time at the beginning. I'm on a COVID task force for the health board, we talk once a week and they're just making appointments based on what kind of allocation they believe they're going to get. Several weeks ago they thought they were going to get 2300 doses and they got about 300 doses early on. In the state of Ohio there are approximately 400,000 people age 80 and above and the State has only 100,000 doses total as of about a week ago, so it's going to have to work

its way out. The Health Department has to administer the program just as prescribed by the state and if they deviate from that they could potentially not get their future allocations. I think the Health Department is doing an outstanding job. They were getting 450 to 500 calls a day last week before they had the hotline set up. So, there is an immense amount of anxiety with people being put on hold or getting through, but that's the process and I think it will level out a bit as we get through this. Early indications are the vaccine is taking effect and starting to stabilize some of the infections across the community. I would just ask everyone to be patient as we go through this process, it's about an allocation and quantity not about the administering of it, they can do hundreds of doses in a day but just can't get that many doses. I guess, call the hotline, read the paper, listen to the news and you can get information on how to get vaccinated when that time comes.

Mr. Blake – I first want to address the comments made about the news related to the homeless shelter. I too agree I hope than we can do more to help these citizens that are unsheltered in our community. This council approved money for a consultant and that consultant provided a report and I believe this council could take more time to review their recommendations within that report, I believe it included several good recommendations and I hope that sometime this year we can have a really good discussion about some of those recommendations. I do agree that this is not finished, people are still outside even as we speak, we're all in our warm homes and some are outside, so I do hope that we can continue with that work. I do also want to share that I did receive some news that's disappointing. I had meetings with my city official colleagues and construction managers in the spirit of goodwill and excitement to work a partnership in the planning for renovation of council chambers. There were many touch points with people and I was thinking that the process was moving forward correctly. This city council used Rule 11 last month to move forward on the bidding of the project and I was under the impression that the project was going forward in cooperation with a shared goal, but then I learned that a unilateral decision was made to move in a different direction and I could only just express my disappointment in that decision. I was hoping that I would be involved in that. Moving to a more cheerful topic, today members of the Chamber of Commerce received an email from the Community and Cultural Relations Committee, as a member of that committee I'm excited to work with my friend, Dr. Bill McDonald from OSU Newark in extending his call to action that he wrote about a few months ago in the Advocate guest column. The CERT Committee in partnership with Dean McDonald is asking people and any leader really, to join us in continuing the public conversation on creating what Dr. King called the "beloved community". What can we do as individuals, what can our organizations do, what can we do as a Licking County community. These questions and more will be discussed, so in Dr. McDonalds call to action, join us. Remaining silent is not helping so, reply to that email message that went out today. All community leaders are welcome. If you're not a member of the Chamber, I'll be happy to forward the email to you and again, anyone is welcome to participate in continuing those discussions. A great deal of planning has gone into a series organized by our NAACP. I hope that all within the sound of my voice will participate over the next 6 weeks, beginning tomorrow night, we have a 6 week series discussing various topics, all are welcome, all those that view diversity as a strength are encourage to attend. Additionally, the Sunday editions in the month of February of the Newark Advocate will be publishing some local reflective pieces to help all of us celebrate Black History Month. Lastly, my prayers go out today to all of our local families and

families across our great nation that lost a loved one due to COVID. Recognizing this, National Day of Remembrance for victims of COVID and thank you in honoring our safety forces, our health care workers and our front line workers.

Mr. Bubb – I just want to encourage all city leaders and everyone involved with the COVID Funds to continuously evaluate where we're at with those and what we have to spend. There are a lot of folks working at home, a lot of restaurants and businesses struggling and they need the help. Hopefully we can look at that and help them soon. We don't want to get behind the eight ball by any means.

Mr. Fennell – I would like to thank Mr. Smith and Mrs. Bole-Smith for your comments and for voicing support for a low barrier shelter. For community members experiencing homelessness, I too am saddened that the property in question will not be used as a low barrier shelter, but my hope is that it will make way for new options and not an end to this discussion to help address this critical need for our community. I would like to take a quick moment and applaud the members and staffers of the House and the Senate for reconvening just hours after the armed insurrection that attempted to, in my opinion, undermine one of the hallmarks of American Democracy, as peaceful transition of power. They reconvened that very night to honor their constitutional duties and certify the election results on January 6th. This act and the statements made on the floor that night by both Democrats and Republicans showed me how resilient democracy can be. To those officials who spoke out that night and upheld the election, thank you. Please let me be clear that what we witnessed on January 6th also showed me how fragile our democracy is and highlighted the work that we face as a nation. My heart breaks for the families of all those injured and killed during this attack. We cannot let time minimize the reality of what happened at the Capitol. This is not normal, this is not acceptable and only our silence can make it so. Our democracy needs all of us to see reason and speak out against any threat to American Democracy both foreign and domestic.

Ms. Hall – I would like to thank Mayor Hall for the update on COVID. It seems like it changes every day. I am working again with some seniors, so I get a lot of questions that I can't answer. They're trying to be patient. They're 65 or they're 70 or they're 74, so we just try to stay up to date on it. So I appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr. Harris – I'm glad that our President Ellington is going to be able to get his shot, since he's 80 years old, so he can continue our council meetings.

Mr. Lang – I have a quick question in following up to Councilman Blake's comments. I was hoping he could be a bit more specific, I wasn't sure what the issue was, I was surprised to hear that, I haven't been in the loop myself. I was hoping we could give him a quick 30 seconds or so to help articulate what happened there, that would be great.

President Ellington – Apparently I'm out of the loop too because I thought it was being scrapped. So, Mr. Blake, after we get everyone through, if you want to say something I'll give you your minute.

Mr. Marmie – I need to call a Finance Committee meeting. I too want to echo what Mr. Bubb said. I hope that we can get some of these COVID dollars out. I know that when the deadline was approaching, as far as the timeline that they needed to be utilized, there were a number of members of council who really went out of their way and took extra effort to try to get information so that we could get funds out to folks. All of those numbers and data was collected and provided to the Auditor's Office and to the Mayor. Some of it was distributed, a

little bit was distributed to the schools and to a couple other entities, but there are a lot of the information that nothing has happened with. So, I'd just like to know what is going to happen, when is it going to happen and it really needs to be done immediately because there are many businesses hurting and many families hurting due to COVID and I think they could utilize these funds as soon as possible.

Mr. Rath - I too will echo Mr. Bubb and Mr. Marmies' comments. I know a lot of work was done very quickly, a lot of information was gathered and distributed. We have monies sitting around doing nothing right now when they could be a very valuable lifeline, so it would be nice to get those out where they belong and where they could do some good. I'll call a Service Committee meeting for the first of the month.

Mr. Blake – The only thing I would add without having a debate at council here tonight is that the Majority Leader and I had discussed before Thanksgiving the renovations to council and I in good faith brought in a colleague to have several meetings with some city officials and the construction manager personnel and then in January, I find out that totals different direction was taken with regards to the IT work in the chambers. That was very disappointing to me to hear that a unilateral decision was made to go a different direction, when meetings had occurred and I expected it would go in one direction and it went a different direction. So, that's what my comments were related to.

Mr. Marmie – I just want to add that Jeremy is correct, we went into this previously. I had no idea of the direction. That decision was made by the administration, I was not made aware of it until after the fact also. So, there was no discussion with anyone on council when that decision was made. Mr. Blake, I was as much in the dark as you were, so I just wanted to make sure that you were aware of that fact also.

President Ellington – Me too, Mr. Blake. Our next meeting will be February 1st, Committees at 5:45pm and Council at 7:00pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Labutis seconded by Mr. Harris, passed by acclamation

Don Ellington, President of Council