

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NOVI
MONDAY, JANUARY 8, 2024 AT 7:00 P.M.**

Mayor Fischer called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL: **Present:** Mayor Fischer, Mayor Pro Tem Casey, Council Members Gulumurthy, Heintz, Smith, Staudt
Absent: Council Member Thomas

ALSO PRESENT: Victor Cardenas, City Manager
Danielle Mahoney, Assistant City Manager
Thomas Schultz, City Attorney

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

CM 24-01-02 Moved by Casey, seconded by Smith; MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

To approve the Agenda as amended.

Roll call vote on CM 24-01-02

Yeas:	Casey, Gulumurthy, Heintz, Smith, Staudt, Fischer
Nays:	None

PUBLIC HEARINGS: None

PRESENTATIONS:

Novi Public Library Annual Report - Julie Farkas, Library Director

Director Farkas wished the Mayor and Council a Happy New Year and thanked them for the opportunity to be there to share some information about the library. She provided Council with a hard copy of the annual report. She wanted to credit the report and the information in it to Dana VanOast, the Library's communications manager, for putting that together as well as a number of staff members who helped put together the statistics and made this a full report. A couple of things that she wanted to hit on quickly, because she said she knew that she was between the members and a football game that night. In the middle section, when you open up the brochure, are the numbers and what do they mean? What type of story do they tell? First of all the visits to the library, that was a 54% increase from last year. We are getting back to pre-COVID. Everyone coming in and utilizing the building like it was before the pandemic, she was very excited to see these numbers continuing to increase. Next, program participation has a 59% increase from last year as well. Another big number showed summer reading being very successful due to getting back to full staff and having a lot of programs back that weren't available because of the pandemic as well. Getting back to Storytimes and things in a regular fashion for that year. We also had meeting room rentals, something they have been offering since the new building, which is now already 13 years. She said it was hard to believe we opened it in 2010. It was opened with an opportunity for the community to rent spaces. And that also increased by 87% from a year ago. The library is definitely being

seen as a destination place and something for people, businesses and community members, because a lot of people will rent it for birthday parties, retirement parties, things like that, and utilize the space. She said it was great to have them in the building. Teen space visits had a 314% increase. The students are back, this year especially. She mentioned her January e-newsletter that led with an article about the usage of the library and how busy it was just after school time from about 2:45 to 5:30pm Monday through Friday. They see wonderful numbers of students coming over from the high school. There's about 2000 students in the high school and they probably see about 10%. So about 200 kids walk over and utilize the space. In her article, she shared that they wanted to warn people of how busy it is during that time period of 2:45 to 5:30pm, and that there could be a potential for no seats in the building because of how busy it is. When they knew that teenagers were coming over with the new building, they provided a new program, which is not new now. But it's been very successful, called Teen space. It is the large meeting room which started with just one side of it but is now being used for the whole room after school being dedicated to teenagers and having a place to hang out and socialize. The teens do come over. They've been in school all day. She said they've been sitting seven hours, they've been studying hard at school, when they get out of school right in that first hour or so they're not necessarily ready to settle back down and study again, they need a break. They do come over to the library they get very good use of the cafe and having that partnership with the school district. We provided teen space to give them a space to hang out and socialize. There's a ping pong table, there's games, they can do homework, there is an adult monitor in the room to provide some guidance. They use it as a potential place maybe because they're waiting for a sport or a club to go to after school. Or maybe they just need that space for a little bit and then they move on into the building to go study and meet with study groups and some of their other friends, some colleagues that they're studying with. So, this year those freshmen and sophomores specifically have found us and they are using us on a regular basis. She encouraged Council to go over and see that timeframe of 2:45 to 3:30 – 4 o'clock when there is that activity going on, coming over from the high school. She said she appreciates them. She knows that people sometimes share concern, because it's a lot of people, a lot of kids, traffic and stuff happening at that time. But truly, she sees them our young, using our library, and then committing to the community and being part of the community. They have been very diligent with working with them and wanting to give them, even with it being a public space, a safer space that they could be in during that timeframe after school. So that space alone has seen a major attendance rise, because they are going in, they're interacting with the staff person that's there, and they're using the space when they're wanting to be in the building, but maybe not necessarily, it's not a study time for that timeframe. There were big numbers on that, and she can't wait to see next year's numbers, because just from the fall from just September this year, it's even larger, so it's great usage. Next was summer reading, a summer reading program and books that were read, they had a 12% increase in that as well. This year was 42,314 and a year ago, it was 37,695. So again, the summer reading program was back up. She also wanted to hit on our Friends of the Novi Public Library. They are huge supporters, they are the 501c3 of the library. They're an arm of the Library, a separate entity, but definitely doing a lot of fundraising and advocating for them. She provided a breakdown of the amount of gifts that they gave over the year. They provided wonderful performances and programs that

help sustain some things that they don't necessarily do with the general budget. She wanted to point out those things. They really had a great year. She gave Council an introduction to their strategic plan. They are working on some of the goals that will go with that. Since they got the plan in place, she has been meeting with her staff over the last few months, and they will have even more information for Council in the future. She said that she would be happy to entertain any questions.

Mayor Fischer said that they always enjoy having her there. He didn't have any questions at that time. He said that they were set to meet next week to go through some of these items. He added that they all know that the library is one of the gems of this community. He thanked her and all her hard-working staff, and of course, the library board and what they provide, the guidance of working with you as well. He thanked her for coming that night and thanked the whole team over there. He would turn it over to his colleagues to see if they had any questions. Member Gurumurthy said she wanted to appreciate everything that they do as a staff, the library board and Julie herself being on the board. She saw everything that happens behind the scenes. She said thank you so much. The annual report speaks about it. So, she appreciated it. Director Farkas thanked her for having been on the committee. Mayor Fischer said that he apologized for stealing some of her board members, to which Director Farkas said she knew, and they would talk about that.

MANAGER/STAFF REPORT:

City Manager Cardenas wanted to let the Mayor and Council know that there were reports that we're going to have some snow coming into the area starting that night and then possibly another storm hitting later in the week. The crews are ready to tackle this. We haven't really had a good snow. Today we have a lot of salt we need to use, so we'll be heavily salting the areas when we do get some snow, so stay tuned.

ATTORNEY REPORT: None

AUDIENCE COMMENTS:

Katie Chuba said her address wasn't in Novi. She is the new president at the Novi Chamber of Commerce. She wanted to introduce herself to the Council as well as the City. She was super excited to take on this position. She was six weeks in already stirring the pot pro-business. The chamber office is in process of moving, on her first day on the job she was thrown the keys. It was really exciting. They are turning their office space into an epicenter of business for their members to collaborate and educate themselves. They will do presentations there and have other opportunities to use the space. She will be introducing some educational series for businesses, trying to collaborate with the City and other business partners, to push business forward and help their members and help businesses in the area thrive and prosper. She said again, she just wanted to introduce herself and say thank you so much. Mayor Fischer said thank you for the introducing, and we look forward to working with you too. He then asked if there was anyone else in the

audience who wished to make comment? State your name and address and your three minutes will begin.

Duglass Young, of 216 Wainwright, wanted to bring attention to the board, looking at some options of remediation on the busy street that they live on. Right now, on the street of Wainwright with the adjacent as well, there's a public concern about accessing streets from an emergency standpoint. Right now, the street itself is known that it's 20 feet wide, and in typical residential areas around the 27-foot mark. Their concern was what was the opportunity to look at widening the street, it is obviously a larger challenge. But there are some options, potentially, to look at to help remediate some of those obstructions that are in the roadway adjacent to the race properties. In addition to Wainwright, the street that is Paramount is even a graver, narrower Street, those flanked the two. Accessing that street is even greater because it's a single roadway as well. They pulled up some photos that they had submitted for presentation. They continued by saying that what they were looking at is, they brought to their attention back in the fall of 2022 ahead of the spring work that was done in the street itself. They know that there's not an opportunity to really do a lot of widening on the street, but there may be an opportunity to look at some signage or something to identify parking on one side of the street, potentially the hydrant side, that would give a little bit of a fire lane, because the concern is actually the fire lane itself is not existent in that roadway. In addition to just supporting documentation, they did have a letter from one additional resident to help support the overall concern. Looking at the quick fixes or what opportunities exist, maybe signage is one, they also have a greater concern that there is an abandoned vehicle on the street itself, that has not been removed. They know that the city has taken action to try and put stickers on it and to try and remove it but there's no ordinance set to help support that being actually removed. They feel at this point, one of the quick fixes would be to remove the obstacles that are on that street, impeding the traffic itself with accessibility, want to be removing the vehicle itself, that's not tagged correctly, it's not able to be removed. It's been there for at least two years now. They said that officer Tillman was involved as well as Sergeant Boody was also aware of the situation.

Joe Bertera of 130 Rexton in North Novi. He said he was trying to figure out why the city was coming after his neighborhood so hard about their lakefront lot. He said he thought they spent like a half million dollars suing one resident in his neighborhood. Why can't that money be better spent, like, on the fire stations that he read about in the posts or maybe the homeless people at 96 and Beck. He said that they just want to keep coming after Novi residents in his neighborhood and the neighborhood spent an exorbitant amount of money to fight off their own city. He said that he was not involved in the lawsuit. It was another neighbor. He said the city's whole plan was to sue one neighbor on a bunch of frivolous accusations. He doesn't own the land. He's not running a marina. But now they are trying to basically black bow the entire neighborhood into this lawsuit. He said it was like you're saying, oh, we need the whole neighborhood in here. And you're only seeing one person and the basis for the whole lawsuit is that the lakefront protection ordinance which he has shown time and time again, what they said in 1986, about this ordinance, it doesn't apply to existing subdivisions, right. It was for future development, which made sense in 1986. He said they just keep bearing down on the neighborhood, basically

tearing apart his neighborhood. He has been there 23 years, and said you guys are plowing through this neighborhood, tearing apart relationships, friendships, property values, which is a huge deal. Everybody bought in the neighborhood to have access to the lake, and you guys just want to rip it out. That takes 100 grand off his house. He is a realtor. All his neighbors are going to lose value of their homes. But you guys just want to keep hammering down on suing us over something that's been there for 100 years. It doesn't make any sense. He said he was sorry this is kind of all over the place. He was doing his best with the situation. He emailed Council earlier that day, and he promised to show a photo. The woman in the photo here is Laurie McLean. She lives on the side of our lake access lot; he was sure none of Council had been to their neighborhood because we're on the top end of Novi at Novi and Walled Lake. This is the woman that gave all the complaints, and a bunch of lies about the whole neighborhood. He said you can see my neighbors here just talking. He has the whole video of it. She walked up to the deck. They said go home, go home three times four times. We're just trying to get a fair proposal. You want control of the lot. You want to have some governance there. He was just asking for some consideration. He said this lakefront protection ordinance, Mr. Schultz said in 2007 it doesn't apply to existing neighborhoods, and you're still doing it.

Miral Dakhilallah of 144879 Stockton Drive asked for Council to introduce a ceasefire resolution for the ongoing genocide in Gaza. At least 23,000 civilians have died in Gaza so far. The cities of Ypsilanti and Canton have called for a ceasefire resolution so far. Speaking as a proud Novi high school graduate and US resident of the city of Novi, she was asking to consider the Palestinian residents in Novi. There are women giving birth with no anesthesia. There are kids getting limbs amputated without any medicine, no after care. There are men going through the rubble and grabbing their families under the Israeli airstrikes that have been happening for 95 days now. She asked for their voices to be heard in the community.

Areej Younis, 25825 Sierra Drive in Novi asked for the Novi City members to introduce a ceasefire resolution in accordance to the ongoing genocide war that is occurring in Gaza. This was echoed for many neighbors, people in Novi who would like the city to set a resolution just to just put a stop, to be on record asking as Novi residents that we are demanding a ceasefire, and we are not standing silent when people are being killed in Gaza.

Farah Ramadan said she lives here in Novi on Spring Lake Boulevard. She wanted to thank the two members of the Novi Community who had already gotten up and spoken about this, she didn't know them, but it was nice to see that this had also struck a chord with so many members of the community. She said that she saw that Detroit has done it, Dearborn has done it. Dearborn heights has done it. Canton has done it. Ypsilanti's done it. She would take a lot of pride in knowing that Novi also has those values and cares about the members of its community, especially since we are, you know, in a city that's right outside of somewhere with the greatest population of Arabs in the US or Muslims in the US. She said it is something that's very personal for a lot of us. She is not Palestinian; she is an Arab. She's American, She lives here in Novi, but does have Arab roots. It's heartbreaking to see what's happening. And while she understood that we don't have

much federal control, she knew, with all due respect, Council probably couldn't do very much about federal budgeting or what happens with that money, it would be nice to just have that symbolic stance and to know that at least the members of the City Council and the members of the community stand with the people of Palestine and against the killings that are happening unjustly. She didn't think that there's anything discriminatory about that. She said she had nothing but love and respect for all members of our community, She thought that it would be nice to have that solidarity there. To have that symbolic stance that we don't stand with what's happening. Thank you to those who spoke about it before and maybe those will step up now and talk about it too.

CONSENT AGENDA REMOVALS AND APPROVALS:

Mayor Fischer removed item E.

CM 24-01-03 Moved by Casey, seconded by Staudt; MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

To approve the Consent Agenda as amended.

- A. Approve Minutes of:
 December 18, 2023 - Regular Meeting
- B. Approval of a Street Lighting Purchase Agreement with Detroit Edison Company for the installation and ongoing operation cost of two (2) decorative streetlights located at each entrance of the Ballantyne Subdivision and approval of an agreement with Pulte Homes of Michigan, LLC for the sharing of installation and ongoing operation costs per the City's Street Lighting Policy.
- C. Approval of Text Amendment 18.303 to amend Section 7.1, Nonconformities, of the Zoning Ordinance to provide the option for expanding a nonconforming use through a Special Land Use to be considered and potentially approved by Planning Commission after a public hearing. **SECOND READING**
- D. Approval of a resolution to renew the Older Adult Needs Committee.
- E. Approval of a resolution to renew the Public Safety Building Needs Committee.
REMOVED/LATER APPROVED
- F. Enter Executive Session immediately following the regular meeting of January 8, 2024, in the Council Annex for confidential written correspondence from legal counsel and to discuss union negotiations.
- G. Approval of claims and warrants – Warrant 1147

Roll call vote on CM 24-01-03

**Yeas: Gurumurthy, Heintz, Smith, Staudt,
Fischer, Casey
Nays: None**

MATTERS FOR COUNCIL ACTION:

1. Appointments to Boards and Commissions

Mayor Fischer said that there was a ballot for full City Council appointments, and asked Clerk Hanson to read the results of that. She said that for the Beautification Commission there were no applicants therefore no appointments. For Election Commission, Bob Copes was reappointed. For Historical Commission, Debbie Wrobel was reappointed, however, neither of the other candidates received enough votes to be appointed. Mayor Fischer said that they would revisit that at the next meeting.

CM 24-01-04 Moved by Staudt, seconded by Casey: MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

Approval to re-appoint Jeff Wainright to the Corridor Improvement Authority.

Roll call vote on CM 24-01-04

Yeas: Smith, Staudt, Thomas, Fischer, Casey, Heintz
Nays: None

Mayor Fischer said that he would have the opportunity to meet with Director Farkas later in the week, so he would hold off on making appointments for the three full terms at that point. There was a partial term due to the appointment of Member Gurumurthy.

CM 24-01-05 Moved by Staudt, seconded by Casey: MOTION CARRIED: 5-1

Approval to appoint Lori Burke to a partial term on the Library Board.

Roll call vote on CM 24-01-05

Yeas: Smith, Staudt, Thomas, Fischer, Casey
Nays: Heintz

2. Consideration of approval to award the construction contract to True North Asphalt, the low bidder, for the Lakeshore Park Parking Lot Reconstruction project, in the amount of \$270,115.90.

City Manager Cardenas advised that this was for the parking lot at the southern part of the Lakeshore park that houses a lot of activities for the Motor City Mountain Biking Association. This came in under budget, which was extremely exciting. This is in collaboration with the Mountain Biking Association for their construction of a changing station in that same area. We are looking to really enhance that area. This has been in the works for a long time, and again, it's under budget. He said that they were excited to get it underway.

CM 24-01-06 Moved by Staudt, seconded by Casey: MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

Approval to award the construction contract to True North Asphalt,

the low bidder, for the Lakeshore Park Parking Lot Reconstruction project, in the amount of \$270,115.90.

Roll call vote on CM 24-01-06

Yeas: Staudt, Thomas, Fischer, Casey, Heintz, Smith

Nays: None

CONSENT AGENDA REMOVALS:

Mayor Fischer said that reason he removed item E was that it was the resolution renewing the public safety building needs committee. In the effort of this committee and the older adults committee, he was of the impression and belief that these committees should continue in general form as they have during the past year. In order to accomplish that, he would like to see former Mayor Bob Gatt on that committee. This resolution would need to be amended to change paragraph two to say that it would have eight total members instead of seven, including three city council members and five members of the public. He then asked that someone make a motion with those changes.

CM 24-01-07 Moved by Staudt, seconded by Casey: MOTION CARRIED: 6-0

Approval of a resolution to renew the Public Safety Building Needs Committee and to add an additional resident member to bring the total number of members to eight, including three City Council members and five members of the public.

Roll call vote on CM 24-01-06

Yeas: Staudt, Thomas, Fischer, Casey, Heintz, Smith

Nays: None

AUDIENCE COMMENT:

Joe Bertera of 130 Rexton, said he says North Novi because they have zero representation out there. He said he thinks all of you live within a mile of this city hall. The Lakefront protection ordinance with the whole lawsuit started and Bob Gatt was still Mayor. He was just trying to figure out why some of these questions weren't asked. It's been 37 years, 38 years since the ordinance was made. Why was it never enforced? Why was it never enforced for 37 years? Why didn't the city back then go around to everybody around the lake and say that dock has to come out. They never did anything like that 38 years ago. Why? Because it was like he said earlier, it was for future development. He said they promised the residents of that time that it didn't apply to them. He already talked about Laurie McLean. She went after you guys for 10 years, threatened to sue the city. I know Schultz sent out a bunch of demand letters, just demanding things happen, but it's a unique situation. We have a fully buildable lot that we use to get to the lake. So why can't Novi say this is kind of unique, has been there for 100 years, maybe we should have some kind of quorum with the residents. That never happened, but then there's a Lilly Pond on the south side of the lake that was built in 99. They had eight boats out there and they have a dock and it was after the ordinance was enacted and you're still letting it happen.

He asked why wasn't it asked how much is this going to cost taxpayers? He said he has friends that live on the water and pay high property taxes for lakefront property. They are not happy that the city is spending taxpayer dollars on this lawsuit. And you've only mentioned this Saturday, you've only sued one person and probably spent a half million dollars. There are 40 other houses in our neighborhood. Does the city really want to spend \$20 million on a dock? That is like 2% of the boats on the lake. There's 400 plus boats on Walled Lake. We are such a small percentage, but why is this money being spent. He said he didn't understand the logic of spending all this taxpayer money when it can be used somewhere else.

Marian Mahoney, 24108 Westmont Drive, said she was sure everybody here and our entire city sees that the public library really is a gem. It's really a gift to the community. The library board plays a really, really important role in advising and advocating for that, that resource. At the last meeting, a number of us came and listened to the interviews for the candidates who would like to serve our community really exciting. She was thrilled to see all of those new faces, new, young, young, energetic people, and honestly, she was super excited to hear who was going to get that appointment. She understood that the Mayor needed to give great consideration and meet with a director and understand what her needs were before he make some of those really important decisions, but she was really stunned to hear the name that had been appointed tonight that number one was not on the list of candidates certainly didn't interview, and I am sure did not interview. Maybe she was missing something. She said it's really discouraging to people that took the time to apply to prepare for an interview and have great opportunities to contribute. She was personally disappointed to hear about that appointment that did not include any of those new people and people who took the time to apply and to interview.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

MAYOR AND COUNCIL ISSUES:

1. Appointments to Council Committees

Mayor Fischer made his appointments to Council Committees. The new assignments are as follows:

Capital Improvement Program: Members Fischer, Casey, and Staudt.

Consultant Review Committee: Members Casey, Staudt, and Heintz.

Ordinance Review Committee: Members Fischer, Casey, and Staudt, with Member Gurumurthy as an alternate.

Rules Committee: Members Fischer, Casey, Staudt.

Youth Council Review Committee: Members Thomas, Heintz, Casey.

Youth Council Liaison: Member Heintz, with Member Thomas as an alternate.

PRCS Grant Citizen Advisory Committee: Members Smith and Thomas.

Walkable Novi: Members Smith and Thomas

SEMCOG Liaison: Member Smith, with Member Heintz as an alternate.

Public Safety Committee: Members Fischer, Staudt, and Gurumurthy.

Older Adult Needs Committee: Members Casey, Smith, and Thomas.

Mayor Fischer said they were entering into Executive Session at 7:38 P.M. and they did not expect to return to Regular Session that evening.

ADJOURNMENT – There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned at 7:38 P.M.

Cortney Hanson, City Clerk

Justin Fischer, Mayor

Transcribed by Melissa Morris

Date approved: January 22, 2024