

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NOVI
MONDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2022 AT 7:00 P.M.**

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL: Mayor Gatt, Mayor Pro Tem Staudt, Council Members Casey, Crawford, Fischer, Smith, Thomas

ALSO PRESENT: Victor Cardenas, Interim City Manager
Elizabeth Saarela, City Attorney

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Mayor Gatt added to the Mayor and Council Issues "Future Public Safety Building Needs".

CM 22-12-158 Moved by Staudt, seconded by Casey; CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

To approve the Agenda as amended.

Roll call vote on CM 22-12-158	Yeas: Staudt, Casey, Crawford, Fischer, Smith, Thomas, Gatt
	Nays: None

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Program Year 2023 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Application

Public Hearing opened at 7:01 and closed at 7:02 with no public input.

PRESENTATIONS:

**1. Proclamation in recognition of Surya Namaskar (SUN Salutation) Awareness Period
- January 15 - 30, 2023 - Vijay Venugopal**

Mayor Gatt invited Vijay Venugopal and anyone else that he wanted to bring to the podium. He read the Proclamation in recognition of Surya Namaskar (SUN Salutation) Awareness Period – January 15 – 30, 2023.

MANAGER/STAFF REPORT:

Interim City Manager Cardenas mentioned earlier this month, we had a fire in the early morning on December 5th. He said it received media attention that we usually do not experience when we have fire incidents. He asked if Director of Public Safety, Chief Zinser could come down and give City Council a brief overview of the events that transpired on what happened since then to reassure the public that we are in good hands with our fantastically trained blended Fire Department.

Chief Zinser noted that two weeks ago at 2:41 in the morning, the Novi Fire Department and Novi Police Department were dispatched to an address on Barra Street located in the Country Cousins Mobile Home Community on Haggerty Road just north of I-96. He stated the fire ultimately destroyed two homes and damaged a third. He said that night all four stations were fully staffed. He said the Police officers arrived first; they evacuated all three homes. He said at that time, a shed where they believed the fire started was fully had jumped to that homeowner's home, by the time the police officers got there. He stated the Fire Department response was seven minutes and 25 seconds that evening. He said they responded with all four of our engines and one squad. He said the fire triggered mutual aid or mutual aid agreement through the Farmington Hills Fire Department. He said they also utilized mutual aid from Livonia, Commerce and Salem Township. During this event, we had no other calls for service while they were out at the scene. He noted that two homes were destroyed, two families were displaced. He said one family is currently staying with family members and another family is currently staying in a hotel. He said it has for the cause and origin of the fire that has yet to be determined, the Oakland County Fire investigators did call the fire underdetermined. However, he said they believed the fire started in the shed, the homeowner was operating sort of a woodshop in his shed and they believed based on some statements that he was utilizing an older battery charger and had an older tool plugged into the charger. He said that is at this time, their best guess on how the fire started.

Mayor Gatt thanked him for his report. He mentioned that normally during the Manager Report and anything like that they do not open it up for questions from the Council, but that evening he was going to because this is an important topic and it garnered some social media attention. He said Chief Zinser mentioned mutual aid first. He said it was no secret that he was on the Police Department for a long time, and he started 47 years ago today when he graduated from the Police Academy. He said they used mutual aid back then, as a right hand and a left hand, it was just something in the public safety, police, and fire. He stated mutual aid is just something that all the surrounding communities have bought into, it makes one community large when it comes to a disaster or something that requires more help than you have. He asked if that has changed over the last 50 years or is that something still very normal.

Chief Zinser said it is very normal, especially in the fire service. He said all communities are strained on their resources and sometimes you rely on mutual aid, which is very common in the fire service to enhance your resources when needed. He said currently we have automatic mutual aid agreements in place with Wixom, Walled Lake, Farmington Hills, Northville City, Northville Township and Salem Township. He said if there is a structure fire or a possible structure fire, those automatic mutual aids kicked in and in this case of the fire two weeks ago, due to his location and proximity to Farmington Hills, our mutual aid agreement with Farmington Hills kicked in. He said mutual aid is very common and it does enhance our services. He said we live in one of the safest cities in the country and our mutual aid agreements contribute to that.

Mayor Gatt thanked him for saying that, because that was going to be one of his next questions. He wondered if he could say unequivocally and without a doubt, stand there

as the Director of Public Safety in charge of our police and fire departments and tell 67,000 people who live here and hundreds of thousands of people who visit our city, including all the business owners, are we safe here? Chief Zinser replied that the City of Novi is one of the safest cities in the country. He said if you look back at our National Citizen surveys, we received a 94% approval rating on safety or higher. He said we have a number two rating with the Insurance Services Office where they come in, they evaluate the department that puts us in the top 2% in the country. He said our fire department, our model of our fire department is an excellent model. He said it works and it contributes to us being one of the safest cities in the nation.

Mayor Gatt mentioned he receives phone calls and correspondence from other mayors of surrounding cities. He said without a doubt that there is a lot of fire departments within 100 miles of our city that wished they had our model. He said having said that, on social media, there seems to be a campaign to scare some of our residents by saying a fire station is not being staffed at night. He asked Chief Zinser if he could speak to that. Chief Zinser said yes, that is true. He said we have had occasions where we have had a fire station, not staffed, but that must come along with some context that was not shared necessarily on social media. He said if you date back to pre-2013, our fire stations were staffed at night and on weekends, kind of sporadically in different shifts. He said in 2013 we were able to staff that we had enough part time personnel to staff there of our stations 24/7. He said our model is full time staff, staff our fire stations 6 am to 6 pm., Monday through Friday, our part-time staff then staffs stations 6 pm to 6 am, Monday through Friday, and then on weekends. He explained in 2013 to reduce our response times, we had enough paid on call we built that up so that we could staff Fire Stations 1,2, and 3 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He said Station 4 was the station that had not been staffed yet 24/7. He said at night and on weekends, those calls were covered by the next closest station or the station next due, which meant, they were the next in line to take the call and we were turning out part-time firefighters to respond from home at the same time, that was 2013. He noted that in 2017 we had built our part-time staff up enough to where we could now staff all four stations, including Station 4 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He said it was important to mention, we have a contract with Superior Ground Ambulance, they maintain three ambulances in the city all the time, advanced life support ALS, ambulances in the city all the time to respond to all our medical calls. He said on top of that, we have the mutual aid agreements that have already spoken to. He noted that 2020 rolls around, then 2021, about this time last year we started to see an exodus of our part-time staff for various reasons. He said that carried on through the holidays into 2022. He said we had a few full-time members leave earlier in 2022 and we hired from our part-time staff to our full-time staff, we are not immune to this. He stated the national campaign have just resigned from our jobs; we are not immune to the national. He mentioned the national push to not want to go back to work, we are seeing that also. While we are losing our part-time employees, we are seeing fewer and fewer qualified applicants. In June, it got to a point where we were trying to recruit and hire part-time applicants, but we don't. It became a challenge to keep all four stations staffed, so we looked at our staffing, we adjust our staffing model, we know that we have the ambulances in the city. He stated we are heavily recruiting, trying to get more and more people on board. He said it is important to understand too, when a station is not

staffed, how busy is that station and the number of times when a station is not staffed two occasions at station saw two medical runs that were handled by an ambulance and other fire stations responding as well. He said if a station again is not staffed just like we did back in the day, and other stations turned out to take that call, it is not like there are no firemen on duty there, the staff is there. He stated we are constantly looking at how to best adjust our staffing model to serve our community and provide an excellent service and keep moving forward.

Mayor Gatt thought everyone up at the table understood that. He said throughout the whole United States of America, staffing police and fire departments are becoming more and more difficult, less and less people want to be first responders for a myriad of reasons, something that is above us. He said this Council, recognizing that last budget, authorized the city to hire a full-time person in the HR Department that is dedicated to recruiting police and fire paid on call and full time. He understood we are making great headway in the police; we have much less openings than we did a year ago. He said it has been a little bit more difficult in the paid-on-call. He said there is nobody in the City of Novi that should go to bed tonight feeling unsafe, is that correct. Chief Zinser said that was correct. Mayor Gatt said he and his colleagues have had talks with the city manager about this very topic and we are devising a plan that may cost some money that is going to come back to us. We are devising a plan to help us recruit some paid-on-call people. He stated that we know some of the problems with the paid-on-call recruit, it might take 18 months or almost two years before that person is ready to fight fires, they must get all kinds of certifications and training. He said his goal is to go out and get people who are already paid-on-call- maybe from somewhere else already certified so that when we hire them, they can hit the street running. He said it may cost us some money, but he did not think there would be anyone objecting to that. He thought it was important that tonight's took place, and that the Chief had the opportunity to explain the situation and there was nobody prodding him to say anything he assumed. Chief Zinser said that was correct. Mayor Gatt said he was explaining the situation as a professional, and he has been on the job for many years, he is living it, he sees it himself. He said he recognized that sometimes that we don't staff a station at night, but if he heard it correctly, we have three ambulances that hire that and handle all the medical runs. He said we have firefighters in other stations that handle and assist those ambulances, if there was a fire in a station that was not staffed. He said other firefighters would respond from staffed stations, and mutual aid would be called in. He said so far today, we have had no problems. Chief Zinser said that was correct. All the calls that we have handled from a station has been unstaffed have been medical runs, or what we call the lift assist. He said many of those nights when the stations that have been staffed, that station has seen zero calls for service. Mayor Gatt commented that he should understand that everybody on Council wants to help, we are going to do whatever we can, whatever it takes to rectify this problem, because our goal is to have every fighter station staffed 24/7, so that is our goal. He said even considering this nationwide problem of hiring and training, police and firefighters, we were better than most and we want to be better than most. He said we are going to tackle this issue together.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said he had a couple of questions. One is, he understood that we have a captain and two full time lieutenants on duty 24/7. Chief Zinser replied we have a captain, lieutenant on duty during the day shift, and then a captain, lieutenant on duty for the night shift. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said we have 24/7 a full time Captain and Lieutenant full-time leadership. Chief Zinser replied yes. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said his second question was regarding the insinuation made that as a result of this shed fire that two homes burned, and that would not have happened under other circumstances. The other circumstances meaning that if it was the day shift full time firefighters, is there any truth to that whatsoever? Chief Zinser said he believed the fire could have started under any circumstances. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said in other words, it would not have mattered, the result would have been the same whether it was at two o'clock in the morning or two o'clock in the afternoon. Chief Zinser said it would be difficult to see what the result would be, but to your point, that this fire could happen under any circumstances, and yes, it could be the same results.

Member Smith wanted to comment on something Chief had said earlier about training. It was his understanding is full-time, part-time, paid-on-call, they are all receiving the same level of certification. Member Smith commented that anyone that shows up at a fire in Novi you do not have to worry about whether or not they are part-time and has less training, it is all they are fully certified and prepared to help you out with your fire. Chief Zinser said yes, that is correct, everybody completes a training, all training is the same. They are all trained to the same standards.

Member Thomas said she had a couple of questions. First, she asked if he could let us know if there is a difference in response time when someone has an emergency if one station has staff or unstaffed, do we have those figures. Chief Zinser said back when we started talking about this years ago, about staffing stations full time it was an effort to reduce response times. He said year to date 2021, our overall response time for priority runs was five minutes and 51 seconds overall in 2021. He stated year to date for 2022 our overall response time is currently five minutes and 56 seconds. He said our response time has not been significantly impacted by not having one station unstaffed. Member Thomas asked if he could give her an idea of what the most common calls are that come into fire stations or fire department response. Chief Zinser said most calls are medical related. Member Thomas mentioned we have other coverage for medical professionals to be able to attend to those, is that correct. Chief Zinser said yes, we have three Superior ALS ambulances they maintain in the city to respond to our medical runs.

Mayor Gatt thanked Chief Zinser and reminded him that they were there to help him if there was anything that he needed, he said don't hesitate to call on City Council through Mr. Cardenas.

ATTORNEY REPORT: None

AUDIENCE COMMENTS:

Avya Pappuri said she was a proud resident of Novi. She said she is a 10th grader at Novi High School. She said the Hindu community recently concluded a Sewa Diwali food donation drive, and she wanted to briefly share about it. She stated according to the United States Department of Agriculture, more than 34 million people, including 9 million children in the United States, are food insecure. In Michigan alone, there are over a million people and out of them, 297,000 are children. Sewa Diwali is an initiative by all the communities and organizations who celebrate Diwali which is the Festival of Lights. Sewa is a Sanskrit word meaning selfless giving. Aimed at fostering togetherness and promoting the concept of sewa, Sewa Diwali provides a platform for Dharmic and Indic communities to organize food drives during Diwali, which starts in October. She said the drive runs through the end of November, and Sewa Diwali extends to more than 200 cities and towns in 2022, and it is called the fifth consecutive year. Since its inception in 2018 the Sewa Diwali project has donated close to 1.5 million pounds of food nationwide. This year nationally 630,000 pounds of food is donated benefiting 200 plus organizations from 32 states, including food pantries, homeless shelters, worship houses, and schools across the United States. She said here in Michigan over 6000 pounds of nonperishable food items were donated last month with the initiative of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh and Sewa International with the help of 50 volunteers and 11 different organizations and five different stores. She said their beneficiaries include the Picket Square for Veterans where 1200 pounds of food were donated, Carers of Farmington Hills which 2000 pounds were donated, Detroit Service-Learning Academy where 100 goodie bags of about 850 pounds were donated, Gleaner's Community Food Bank where over 1000 pounds were donated, Iskcon Detroit where 1420 pounds were donated, and many more places. Next year they would like to invite the committee members to join the cause because they say service to humanity is service to divinity.

Anand Pappuri, Novi resident, said there is more electrification happening around the country. People are choosing batteries and electric vehicles are coming into households. People are deploying energy backup systems, which are also big batteries. More chemical storage is coming into houses. He thought there was more certification for the firefighters. He said as a citizen, he wants to see the certifications and if we are ready for the next 10 years. He would like to have more educational sessions in the high school and within the community.

CONSENT AGENDA REMOVALS AND APPROVALS:

CM 22-12-159 Moved by Casey, seconded by Thomas; CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

To approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

- A. Approve Minutes of:
 December 5, 2022 - Regular Meeting
- B. Consideration to adopt Resolution Authorizing Conveyance of City Property (Parcel No. 22-11-101-004) to adjacent property owners for \$2,000.

- C. Acceptance of a Woodland Conservation Easement from Catholic Central High School of Detroit for woodland replacement areas being offered as a part of JSP21-17 Catholic Central Connector Road, for property located on the south side of Twelve Mile Road between Wixom Road and Napier Road in Section 18 of the City.
- D. Acceptance of a Woodland and Wetland Conservation Easement from BC Novaplex LLC being offered as a part of JSP19-24 Innova Apartments, for property located on the west side of Haggerty Road north of Twelve Mile Road in Section 12 of the City.
- E. Acceptance of an Open Space Preservation Easement from Singh Development, LLC as a part of JSP18-76, Scenic Pines Estates, located on the south side of Pembine Drive, south of South Lake Drive and east of West Lake Drive in Section 3 of the City.
- F. Final approval of the request of Cambridge of Novi, LLC for a Second Amendment to the previously approved Planned Rezoning Overlay (PRO) Agreement, JSP 17-52 and JSP 21-12, Terra, associated with Zoning Map Amendment 18.718. The applicant received approval for a 41-unit single-family ranch development on approximately 30.14 acres on the north side of Nine Mile Road, east of Napier Road. The current amendment is requested to make changes to sidewalks in the Phase 2 portion of the project and clarify woodland tree replacement planting.
- G. Approval of Resolution to adopt the City of Novi Emergency Action Guidelines (EAG) in support to the Oakland County Emergency Operations Plan.
- H. Approve the Program Year 2023 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Application in the approximate amount of \$125,932 and authorize the Mayor to sign the Application.
- I. Approval of claims and warrants – Warrant 1122

Roll call vote on CM 22-12-159

Yeas: Casey, Crawford, Fischer, Smith, Thomas, Gatt, Staudt
Nays: None

MATTERS FOR COUNCIL ACTION:

1. Appointments to Boards and Commissions

City Clerk Hanson read the results of the balloting: Pamela Superfisky was reappointed to the Election Commission, Nicol Fuller was appointed to Board of Review, Kim Nice and Dan Pierce were reappointed to the Historical Commission and Linda Krieger was reappointed to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Mayor Gatt congratulated everyone appointed that evening. He believed we have some openings and if anybody is interested in serving on various Boards or Commissions that we have openings for, please contact the City Clerk.

- 2. Consideration of approval to award the construction contract to Pamar Enterprises Inc., the low bidder, for the Sanitary Sewer Upgrades (Lanny's Influent and Drakes Bay Effluent) and Pump Station Rehabilitation (Drakes Bay and Wixom Pump Stations) in the amount of \$5,414,736.53 and amend the budget.**

CM 22-12-160 Moved by Thomas, seconded by Smith; CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Approval to award the construction contract to Pamar Enterprises, the low bidder, for the Sanitary Sewer Upgrades (Lanny's Influent and Drakes Bay Effluent) and Pump Station Rehabilitation (Drakes Bay and Wixom Pump Stations) in the amount of \$5,414,736.53 and amend the budget.

Roll call vote on CM 22-12-160

Yeas: Crawford, Fischer, Smith, Thomas, Gatt, Staudt, Casey

Nays: None

- 3. Consideration of a request from Maples Hospitality, LLC for a new Class C quota license to be located at 31260 Wakefield Dr, Novi, MI 48377 and Agreement on the Prohibition on Profiteering by Class C Liquor License Holders.**

Interim City Manager Cardenas said this was a request from the new owners of the Maples Golf Course for one of the 6 remaining quota licenses. The petitioner is available for questions.

Salam Elia, the attorney on behalf of the applicant, Maples Hospitality. The owners are Richard Konja and Ramy Denha. She said the property is uniquely situated in a neighborhood and the golf course runs through the neighborhood. Whether you go towards M5 or Walled Lake, there are a lot of commercial businesses. The establishment is unique and has a beautiful landscape with an executive golf course, which is rare. Her clients purchased it because they fell in love with it and it was being neglected by the previous owner. She understood the previous owner did not have a liquor license and that's what they are asking for the quota license. She said this would be a public course with no membership dues. Everyone can utilize it. She said this business needs to be able to serve alcohol. With the type of investment they are making, they've spent over six figures on golf carts. With the supply industry and the shortages with inflation, it's convenient that her clients operate in the landscape and construction businesses and can use their resources to get their property back to life. She said she has represented municipalities before and one thing they hate is when the potential is not utilized for a project. Her clients are willing to invest and commit. They want to contribute to this beautiful city and rehabilitate the golf course and be successful overall. She showed a layout of the building and explained there is tremendous seating capacity and

conference rooms available to rent. She thought that would be a great asset for the community to utilize and host events. Through her research, she said the closest golf course is the Links of Novi and that is 11 miles away. There is a need for this. This will add a huge financial investment to the surrounding area and bring business. It won't negatively impact traffic, health, or public safety given the previous use. She spoke about her clients and how they've been operating in landscaping and development in real estate for over 10 years. They've hired a consultant to develop the menu. He would also be advising on the management of the hospitality side of the restaurant to make sure it has what it needs to survive. There will also be a rehabilitation of the full-service bar. The environment will be family friendly. The restaurant will give you everything a private club would but without any membership fees and is conveniently located in your backyard. This is as unique as it gets. When you talk about what's important to the city, especially when you only have six licenses left, is longevity. You want people who are invested in this city and who will give back to the city. This is not some corporate management company out of another state. She wanted to emphasize the story behind the building.

Mayor Gatt said he was in favor of developing that property. They've dealt with other requests to develop the property into other things. He didn't think it was inappropriate to have a restaurant with a liquor license there. He said based on the timing of their application; this is happening fast. He asked if the Community Development Department has conducted any inspections as it relates to the kitchen facilities. Mrs. Elia said all the departments did what they needed to do. Mr. Konja said they haven't done anything to the kitchen yet. Mayor Gatt asked if the county has inspected the kitchen. Mr. Konja said the only person who came for inspection was the Fire Department. Mayor Gatt said no approvals have been given by the health department or City of Novi. He asked if the prior kitchen equipment removed. Mr. Konja said yes. Mayor Gatt asked if they could provide a timeline for when everything will be complete and when you plan on opening. Mr. Konja said they are hoping to open May 1st, if possible. He was hoping to have the plans in for the kitchen in a few weeks. We're putting everything exactly where it was in the kitchen, they just need to send the plans to the Fire Department. Mrs. Elia said her clients bought the building in June and there is nothing there for the health department to come and inspect yet. Mayor Gatt said he understood. He asked if the applicants have operated restaurants in the past. Mr. Konja said he has a history of operating businesses. Mayor Gatt said he fully supports this endeavor but, in his opinion, they were jumping the gun on this. He thought they should postpone a decision. He said they need more information, more inspections, and a better timeline. The city has six quota licenses, and they aren't going anywhere. The Maples is an important part of the city. There was a time when that restaurant was viable and well attended. He would not be ready to vote yes at this time. He asked for more information about the kitchen and said they need to do more work.

Mrs. Elia asked to address some of the concerns he brought up. She said she was familiar with this process and the information that was requested has been provided. If there is additional information that needs to be supplemented, like the kitchen, it's not going to be demolished or remodeled or redesigned. They need to pick the right equipment. She

said they've shown from the financial background information that her clients have sufficient funds to do that. If you are looking for renderings, they usually come later. She said they want to work with the city, but she was concerned about how long it will take at the Liquor Control Commission and didn't think it was premature. Mayor Gatt said he understood but he wasn't ready to approve and didn't think they were ready.

Member Fischer said he echoed the same concerns. There was an applicant recently who was nearly ready to open. They were much further along in the process. He mentioned that years ago they gave away a license to an applicant who was doing a redevelopment and it was 4 or 5 years before that license was even used. He asked the City Attorney if anything has changed. He said Council granted that license and he recalled Council having discussions about trying to reclaim that license because the business was not using it and was not operating. He asked what the process was for a liquor license, if they approved it and things didn't come to fruition in the timeline they were told. City Attorney Saarela said nothing has changed in terms of the ordinance. We learned some lessons from that situation. She said Council can give a conditional license, however the problem with that is the liquor license is a property interest. Once you give it, it's hard to take it away. The concern is that if you grant it and nothing happens, you have a liquor license, one of the very few you have, that is hanging in limbo. She said Council has the option to grant a conditional license that says the premises must be completed by a certain date to have the liquor license. The problem with that is there is no statute to follow to reclaim the license. She explained the reason we have that conditional approval option in the ordinance is typically for when there's one last approval that hasn't been granted at the time of Council's consideration. It hasn't historically been used for proposals that are in the initiation phase. Member Fischer agreed and said if Council did grant conditional approval, it seems like they would be setting case law and end up paying a lot of money to rescind the license. He said they were in an interesting predicament. They just got these quota licenses, and they aren't going anywhere. They've had two applicants so far. One was postponed and the other was approved. He said he wasn't ready to approve this but appreciates the investment. He added that this was the right use of the property and if they were further along in the process, the kitchen was done and inspected, he might be ready to approve.

CM 22-12-161

Moved by Fischer, seconded by Gatt; CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

To postpone consideration of the request from Maples Hospitality, LLC for a new Class C quota license to be located at 31260 Wakefield Dr, Novi, MI 48377 and Agreement on the Prohibition on Profiteering by Class C Liquor License Holders.

Member Fischer asked administration to continue to work with the applicant to move this along and keep Council updated on the progress of the building and the permitting process and bring this back as necessary.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said he was supportive of this because we've all had issues with this property. Getting this building a functional, operating kitchen is a good way to assure it's not back in their lap in the near future. He agreed with the previous speakers. He said

one of the difficulties in a business like this is that it's extremely expensive to build kitchens. He didn't hear that it's necessary that the kitchen be built and everything to be ready to open before they issue a license, but he was hearing they wanted it to be farther along so they have an idea when it might open. He said most of the liquor license that have been given during his time had been ongoing concerns. The last quota license Council gave was to an individual applicant with a long and illustrious history of running restaurants, including in Novi. He wanted to make it clear to the applicants and administration what they were looking for. He said getting those things together and in front of Council is important to them. They had been burned in the past and he thought they've learned to not let that happen again. He said it's extraordinarily important that they have a thorough, detailed plan in place with the approval of the proper authorities and the Health Department in Oakland County have some say in this. When the Economic Development team feels comfortable that it's moved to a point where Council can issue a license, he would support the license with it comes back under the right conditions.

Member Crawford asked what their plans were for the golf course. It's going to take a lot to get it back in shape and it's part of the whole project. Mr. Konja responded that he was a firm believer in natural grounding, so he restores lawns. He said he fell in love with gold and learned it is very expensive to treat these greens and get everything up to par. They've spent a lot of money repairing irrigation and trying to get the greens rolling. They are trying their best to get everything green to beautify the golf course. He said they want to accommodate all golfers.

Member Fischer wanted to clarify that this postponement wouldn't create additional fees. City Attorney Saarela confirmed that was correct. It would be treated as an incomplete application at this point.

Roll call vote on CM 22-12-161

**Yeas: Fischer, Smith, Thomas, Gatt, Staudt,
Casey, Crawford**
Nays: None

CONSENT AGENDA REMOVALS FOR COUNCIL ACTION: None

AUDIENCE COMMENT:

COMMITTEE REPORTS: None

MAYOR AND COUNCIL ISSUES:

1. Future Public Safety Building Needs

Mayor Gatt said he has dedicated his entire life to public safety. He started working for the City of Novi Police Department 47 years ago and our City is only 53 years old. Our public safety buildings are inadequate. Our officers need and deserve better. He said there is no more room for female locker rooms which makes it difficult to fire any more

female officers. He added that no one is complaining, he is pointing out that it's inadequate. It's time we turn our attention to the needs of the building. First, he wanted to talk about the fire stations. Fire Station One has to be replaced; we've been talking about it for years. It sits on land that's in our Main Street area, and we want to develop that property. Fire Station Two is by Walled Lake and is old and antiquated. It went through a minor revitalization several years ago, but it doesn't fit the needs of the firefighters working there. Fire Station Three also must be replaced. Only Fire Station Four is more modern and serves the needs of those who work there. He then spoke of the police station. He said he was an original occupant of that building and everything was modern for its time. Today the police station is housing not only our police officers, cadets, administration and even fire administration, but there are federal and state law enforcement agency staff. He said there is no more room, and he was shocked to see how little space there was. Combined, these old, antiquated buildings make it difficult to recruit and retain. We need to build better; we need to modernize because our residents deserve it. He said his dream and vision for the future was a public safety administration headquarters. He wants to see the Police Department on one side and the Fire Administration on the other, with a small museum that houses pieces of our storied history in the middle. He said there are pictures and mementos of the people who made our public safety units the best of the best. People like Lee BeGole, Dwayne Bell, and Art Lenahan. He said Novi has a bright and bold history pertaining to our public safety and that story isn't told enough. He said attached to the Public Safety administration headquarters, behind the Fire Administration part, could be where we build Fire Station One. Fire Stations Two and Three would have to be completely rebuilt. The present Police Station would be converted on the first floor to a senior citizen center. Our senior citizens are sorely lacking in space, places to go, places to recreate, places to meet. They could have another place to gather, to play, to socialize, to meet, to dance, to go to school. He said the second story could be converted into an extension of our present City Hall because it's crowded here, too. He said the possibilities are endless and the time is right. We just had a great financial report, and the City of Novi is doing great. We are almost completely out of debt. We are strong and healthy financially.

CM 22-12-162

Moved by Gatt, seconded by Staudt; CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

To direct administration to bring forth a proclamation directing the Mayor to appoint a committee made up of three Council Members, including the Mayor, a few members of the community at large, as well as several staff members, including the Director of Public Safety/Chief of Police, Fire Chief and the Interim City Manager to make up the Public Safety Building Needs Committee.

Mayor Gatt said once that committee meets for the first time to go over a schedule needs timetable, it will come back to City Council with a request for some funding to begin the process of choosing locations, needs of these facilities that will bring us into this new century, and will serve the residents and businesses for the next 50 years. Our

buildings are old, our police and firefighters deserve better and it's our job to provide that.

Roll call vote on CM 22-12-162

**Yeas: Smith, Thomas, Gatt, Staudt, Casey,
Crawford, Fischer**
Nays: None

Member Casey said she was excited to hear this conversation start at the table and was excited to hear about the recommendation to form a committee to do some of the hard work. She said we've known for years that our buildings are not up to the standard that we'd like to hold ourselves to. She said she has binders in her office that talk about looking at all the fire stations and doing an analysis of what it would take to upgrade our fire stations. She appreciates the opportunity to have a committee that includes our public safety officials, but it might be interesting to see if there are citizens who they might consider putting on the committee. She suggested they get some perspective from the residents and businesses as well. She said she was fully in support of the formation of a committee to do the due diligence and hard work and come back with a strong recommendation for what the City needs to meet our public safety needs. She thought what it would take is going to be a massive undertaking, and it is one of several that we are going to be faced with in the coming years, including other needs with infrastructure, like broadband. They have a lot of things in front of them and she was excited to see this one moving forward. She said this motion had her full support.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said when he heard about this, he couldn't have been happier. He said we make a big commitment to police and fire in this city, whether it's fine engines, equipment, more officers. It's time for us to step up to the next level. It's going to cost a lot of money and we are going to get a lot of benefit out of it. He said the idea with the senior center and second floor, it's a great opportunity to put the Parks and Recreation office there. We have land around the city that we could potentially consider for fire stations in various parts. There's a lot of work to do and a lot to think about. He said everybody knows he doesn't like debt, but this is one where it's time to step up, between this and Beck Road. He said hopefully we can get federal funding for Beck Road, but the time is now to make the long-term commitment to the police and fire in our city.

ADJOURNMENT – There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:13 P.M.

Cortney Hanson, City Clerk

Robert J. Gatt, Mayor

Transcribed by Deborah S. Aubry

Date approved: January 9, 2023