

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NOVI  
MONDAY, APRIL 22, 2024 AT 7:00 P.M.**

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

## PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

**ROLL CALL:** Mayor Fischer, Mayor Pro Tem Casey, Council Members Gorumurthy, Heintz, Smith, Staudt, Thomas

**ALSO PRESENT:** Victor Cardenas, City Manager  
Tom Schultz, City Attorney

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

**CM 24-04-51      Moved by Casey, seconded by Smith; MOTION CARRIED: 7-0**

**To approve the agenda.**

**Roll call vote on CM 24-04-51**

|              |                                                           |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Yeas:</b> | Casey, Gurumurthy, Heintz, Smith, Staudt, Thomas, Fischer |
| <b>Nays:</b> | None                                                      |

**PUBLIC HEARINGS:** None

**PRESENTATIONS:** None

**CITY MANAGER REPORT:**

City Manager Cardenas recognized that April 22, is Earth Day and April 26, is Arbor Day. He said the city has many events to honor the spirit of the two days. He noted there are signs with tree facts printed and posted throughout Lakeshore Park and on the trails there. He added that Rick Meader, City Landscape Architect, is leading a guided hike on Wednesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024. On April 27<sup>th</sup>, the city will be distributing free tree and shrub seedlings to residents. City Manager Cardenas said a local Girl Scout Troop will be volunteering in that process. He said the City Arborist will give a presentation on Novi's Urban Forest, the history of Arbor Day, and some practical tree care tips at noon on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024. He added that there would be supplies for people who do self-guided mustard pulls so that residents can help remove the invasive species from the park. He noted that the RRRSOC would have several hazardous waste days to recycle hazardous home waste. That will be held at Oakland Community College on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and at the Milford Civic Center on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024. He added that the Department of Public Works also offers to recycle materials for people who don't have curbside pickup.

**ATTORNEY REPORT:** None

**AUDIENCE COMMENTS:** None

**CONSENT AGENDA REMOVALS AND APPROVALS:**

**CM 24-04-52                      Moved by Thomas, seconded by Smith; MOTION CARRIED: 7-0**

**To approve the Consent Agenda as presented.**

- A.     Approve Minutes of:  
        April 8, 2024 - Regular Meeting
- B.     Approval of a resolution to temporarily relocate Precinct 23 for the August 6, 2024 Primary Election and November 5, 2024 Presidential Election.
- C.     Approval to award a two-year Environmental Services Consulting Services Contract to Merjent, Inc. (with the option for three additional one-year renewals), effective immediately, and for the adoption of revised fee schedule, subject to final approval of the form and terms of the contract by the City Manager and City Attorney.
- D.     Approval to award Great Lakes Power & Lighting Inc. the electrical services contract for an estimated annual expenditure of \$80,000 for one-year with three one-year renewals.
- E.     Approval to enter into Oakland County Tactical Consortium Agreement which amends and replaces the Interlocal Agreement that was established in 2012.
- F.     Adoption of Oakland County Hazard Mitigation Plan
- G.     Approval to award a contract for benefit broker/consulting services to Gallagher Benefit Services for a three-year term ending April 23, 2027, with two one-year renewal options.
- H.     Approval to purchase a three-year subscription to Arctic Wolf Networks, Inc. network security software through People Driven Technology for an estimated annual amount of \$75,717. This is subject to the final approval of the form and terms of the contract by the City Manager and City Attorney.
- I.     Enter Executive Session immediately following the regular meeting of April 22, 2024, in the Council Annex for confidential communication from legal counsel.
- J.     Approval of claims and warrants – Warrant 1154

**Roll call vote on CM 24-04-52**

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

**MATTERS FOR COUNCIL ACTION:**

**1. Consideration of recommendation from the Older Adults Needs Committee to subsidize senior transportation medical rides through People's Express for residents age 55+ and for any individual with a limiting disability who cannot drive beginning July 1, 2024.**

City Manager Cardenas said that since about 2018, City Council made it a policy that Senior Transit would be free to Novi Residents to travel within the City of Novi. He added that anything outside of the City of Novi or outside of a ten-mile radius would be charged a fee. He added that the Older Adult Needs Committee is approaching the Council with this item for direction on a possible subsidy leading up to the transition to People's Express. He offered that there are about three options for consideration. He said you can utilize the previously budgeted funds for the Novi-operated transit to subsidize all senior and disabled transit rides. He offered that they can subsidize a portion of the ridership fare in order to give the rider a stake in their reservation. He said that past numbers show that when rides are free the number of cancellations increases. He offered that having a stake in their reservation, or a small cancellation fee would prevent people from canceling as much as they do. City Manager Cardenas also offered that the Council could decide to do nothing and follow the County's lead by instituting a \$2.00 ride fare for seniors and persons with a disability. He said this may eventually be county-wide and that everyone that is a part of the transit would have a \$2.00 fee. He offered that the decision is completely up for Council's review. He said that they had inquired if the previous municipal credits received through S.M.A.R.T. could offset the charges and were told by the county that that was not the case.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked the Older Adults Needs Committee for their work on this item at the last meeting. She said it was a unanimous decision to subsidize the transportation for individuals for medical rides and for those with a limiting disability. She said that was the recommendation of the Older Adults Needs Committee.

**CM 24-04-53 Moved by Casey, seconded by Smith: MOTION CARRIED: 5-2**

**Consideration of recommendation from the Older Adults Needs Committee to subsidize senior transportation medical rides through People's Express for residents age 55+ and for any individual with a limiting disability who cannot drive beginning July 1, 2024.**

Member Staudt asked if it had been decided in the motion how this was going to be funded. City Attorney Tom Schultz offered that it sounds like the Council would be approving the subsidizing question. Member Staudt said he needed clarification on what the actual motion was. Mayor Pro Tem Casey referred to the motion in the Council Packet. Mayor Pro Tem Casey asked City Manager Cardenas if the budget for the upcoming year shows funding available for Senior Transit. City Manager Cardenas said there is about \$140,000 that is allowable for this use. Member Staudt asked then if the rides were going to be fully subsidized. Mayor Pro Tem Casey said the motion made was to subsidize medical rides for people ages 55 and any individual with a limiting disability beginning on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. Member Staudt stated that \$4.4 million is taken from the

taxpayers of Novi to Oakland County for us to turn around and subsidize our seniors and handicapped in a way that was provided without a subsidy in the past. He added he would rather get the money from another source. He said some of the people who just ran for office made a commitment to free senior transportation and this continues to support that, so he will support the motion.

Member Gurumurthy expressed appreciation for the item. She said she has heard from different seniors and diverse committees about how the transportation the city provides is the best. She stated that the motion says it is only medical rides and would like clarification as far as whether it is getting to and from appointments, or more. She added that currently, the city provides free transportation for all individuals 55 years plus and for people with disabilities. Older Adult Services Manager, Kit Kieser, clarified that the City offers rides for 55-year-olds plus for free within the Novi city limits, and it's a \$5 ride to travel within a 10-mile radius from the Civic Center. So, if you are going and coming home from a doctor's appointment it will cost you \$10.00. She added that medical rides can be anything medical such as a dialysis appointment, doctor's appointment, dentist appointment, physical therapy, and things of that nature. Member Gurumurthy asked if there was a reason that the motion supports more medical rides versus the free rides for all over the age of 55 like what the City of Novi Transportation offered currently. Ms. Kieser said that was the recommendation of the Older Adult Needs Committee.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey said a big thing they looked at was that the majority of rides were for medical purposes, and some people use the service multiple times a week and some on a recurring basis. She added that those people were considered for a subsidy because of the frequency of their use. She also mentioned that cancellations are less when the appointments are necessary in comparison to regular errands. She said the committee also felt that there was not a great need in the community to always have free transit.

Member Thomas added that the committee felt that most of the older adults in Novi don't have financial constraints so the \$2.00 is not a burden for them, but for the service to be need-based and free for those individuals. She said that there was discussion about the feasibility of the current structure of the People's Express. She said if someone were to indicate a financial burden, one of the most important types of rides that could be kept track of is medical appointments. She added if you utilize the service every couple of weeks to go grocery shopping, it is probably not a burden, but if you utilize the service multiple times a week for medical appointments, it can add up. She said the committee was trying to make sure that people could get to those medical appointments for free, or if you are an older adult who cannot drive, you could get those trips for free. She added that there is always the opportunity for feedback and that the structure could always change in the future if need be. Member Thomas stated that they are also trying to prevent cancellations, because if you are paying for something you are less likely to cancel.

Member Smith added that there were some questions about means testing and logistically there was no way to make it happen without putting a large burden on staff

or the People's Express because those systems do not exist. He said that the current motion seems like a good solution because they are hitting the people who need assistance. He added that 60% of the residents in Novi voted for the millage to support transit. In addition to the People's Express system which takes people ages 14 years and older, with the consent of a parent, as well as the bus service provided on Grand River and 12 Mile Road that will presumably expand in the future. He said they are not just changing senior transit, there are a lot of other moving parts in the transit process.

Mayor Fischer added that he will be supporting the motion of subsidizing medical rides for people 55 years and older, and for those whose driving is limited by their physical abilities. Mayor Fischer added he would like to see the rides be free for all of the seniors, but this is a step in the right direction. He added that he is disappointed and that it is an embarrassment for Oakland County to not support the City in this way. Mayor Fischer added that it was alluded to that \$4.4 million that the City of Novi Residents send to Oakland County and that \$1.5 million of that is being given to People's Express. He said the City asked Oakland County to continue to support the subsidy cost at \$12,000, and that they said no. He added that the Council is stepping up to take care of our seniors and residents because it is the right thing to do. He said it was sad that Oakland County couldn't step up in this regard.

Member Staudt said he cannot accept this motion and will not support it. He said there is plenty of money set aside to fund all the seniors ages 55 years and over and limited riders. He said for the city to decide who can afford it and who cannot is over the top. He added that in 2018 a decision was made to fund all rides for all users, and this motion is stepping back from that, not because of financial reasons but because they will make the judgment on those individuals' behalf. He asked, 'What about mental health?' He said what if someone needs to go to a center or even somewhere else for their mental health. He said limiting the rides to doctor's appointments is abdicating their responsibility to the senior citizens and residents of Novi.

Member Heintz said while reading through the paperwork on this motion he was trying to gather what the objective was. He added that if the objective is to provide a subsidy to people who are 55 years and older, he would ask what the need is and if they are meeting the goal. He said if the objective is to provide a subsidy to just those who need it, then the main goal should be providing a subsidy to those who need it. He added that if it is too problematic and challenging to identify who those individuals are, being 55 years and older or anyone else, then a medically needed basis is crucial. He said he would assume that mental health and physical health would all be under the same umbrella. He said it is important to come back to knowing what the goal is. He said if they are looking to help people 55 years and up that is one goal, but helping individuals in need should be the golden objective.

Member Gurumurthy thanked the individuals for all the productive conversation. She said she would personally like to see the option to subsidize all individuals over the age of 55 years old and people with disabilities as that is a step in the right direction.

Member Thomas clarified that a mental health appointment is a medical appointment, and that mental health is a medical need. Older Adult Services Manager, Kit Kieser said that they are covered as a medical appointment. Member Thomas also clarified that the motion also offers all free rides to anyone who is disabled or has a limiting disability like people who cannot drive.

Mayor Fischer clarified for the record that the motion on the table was for the second option which was subsidized medical rides only. Manager Keiser clarified that the recommendation on the motion sheet is for medical rides for 55 years old and older to subsidize senior transport and for any individuals with a limiting disability that cannot drive. Mayor Fischer added that that is very clear that it is only for medical rides.

Member Thomas said perhaps she misunderstood because she thought they were offering all rides for those with disabilities. Mayor Pro Tem Casey said she doesn't believe so. Mayor Fischer asked if the member who made the motion would like to move forward with the motion. Mayor Pro Tem Casey wished to proceed.

**Roll call vote on CM 24-04-53**                      **Yeas: Heintz, Smith, Thomas, Casey, Gurumurthy**  
**Nays: Staudt, Fischer**

**2. Consideration of approval to award the contract for landscaping services on city-owned properties to KBK Landscaping for a one-year term with two one-year renewal options for \$232,390.**

City Manager Cardenas stated that the city has used this company since 2021 and that it was this company and two others that submitted bids for consideration. An evaluation team was put together and decided that KBK Landscaping was the preferred bidder.

**CM 24-04-54 Moved by Smith, seconded by Casey: MOTION CARRIED: 7-0**

**Approval to award the contract for landscaping services on city-owned properties to KBK Landscaping for a one-year term with two one-year renewal options for \$232,390.**

**Roll call vote on CM 24-04-54**                      **Yeas: Smith, Staudt, Thomas, Fischer, Casey, Gurumurthy, Heintz**  
**Nays: None**

**3. Approval to move forward with a Co-Responder Program with Oakland County Mental Health Network (OCHN) and approval to submit a grant through the Department of Justice to support the cost of the Program and to use Opioid Settlement funds to help offset the City's share of the Program.**

City Manager Cardenas said that they are looking for direction on this because it is a fiduciary and fiscal kind of impact on the City's budget. He said they want to have the

Council's buy-in before submitting the grant that was due at the beginning of April. He explained that this co-responder program is run through Oakland County Mental Health Network. He said they would host that employee and be responsible for that employee and cover the first year of the program. He said the grant is through the Department of Justice and it is proposing that the city commit 25% of the cost for years two and three equaling out to about \$28,000. He explained the city has those funds in the national opioid settlement. He said if not, the entity would be shouldered wholly on the City. He said they also can evaluate the program at that point and determine if they want to continue or not. He offered that this would go on for three years and needs to bake that cost into the budget, and it can be taken out eventually if it is decided to stop. He said Oakland County Mental Health Network will pay for the first one and then reimburse the entity through monthly invoices for years two and three. The co-responder would work alongside law enforcement officers in the support capacity, bridging the gap between the service officers, and police officers to provide the behavioral health needs of a resident in crisis. He mentioned other cities in Oakland County that have implemented such a program. Since July of 2023, the Oakland County Sheriff's Department co-responder has responded to calls involving 900 people, and of that amount, 277 people were transferred to a crisis center.

Member Heintz asked what the background of the co-responder would be as far as a mental health professional. City Manager Cardenas assured the co-responder would be licensed, go through all of the necessary training, and would be hired through the Oakland County Mental Health Network with their different standards. Chief of Police, Erick Zinser stated that all of the previous information was correct and that once selected for the City of Novi, the co-responder would go through additional training with the Police Department and complete ride-along with the officers to build relationships with the staff. Member Heintz asked if other cities also have one co-responder position, as it is difficult to plan for a crisis. Chief Zinser responded that there would be one person and one position. He added that the hours would be based on historical data provided to Oakland County to assist in the policy development. He said there is no intention to allow the co-responder to self-dispatch. He said they are building into the policy where officers are at a scene and once the scene calms down, they would determine whether a co-responder would be beneficial. He explained if an officer gets a nonurgent mental health call, they can determine if the co-responder could be beneficial and leave the paperwork for that co-responder to follow up. Member Heintz said overall it sounds like a wonderful situation.

Member Staudt clarified that the first year is approval to move forward with a co-responder program with Oakland County Mental Health to be fully funded by Oakland County. He stated that after that first year, the City becomes responsible for it. He said they are, however, going to seek approval of a grant submitted through the Department of Justice to support the cost of the program and to use opioid settlement funds to help offset the city's share of the program in years two and three.

**CM 24-04-55 Moved by Staudt, seconded by Casey: MOTION CARRIED: 7-0**

Member Gurumurthy said this is a great thing and thinks a co-responder is going to help without a doubt. She said that based on the provided data, four cities share two co-responders and asked for confirmation. Chief Zinser confirmed that was correct. She stated Wixom has had 800 calls to date for all of the cities. Chief Zinser said that Auburn Hills, Birmingham, Bloomfield Township, and Rochester City share two co-responders. He explains he has had a conversation with the Auburn Hills Police Chief and unfortunately, in that circumstance, the co-responder spends most of their time in Auburn Hills. The Auburn Hills Police Chief stated that he would have preferred to have his own. However, when the program started, those were the initial four agencies. They got two different grants to get their program started and then that first year they received another grant which allowed them to get the second co-responder. He said Auburn Hills handles about 60 mental calls a quarter. Historically, in Novi in 2013, the city went from 55 calls to 190 calls in 2022, then 189 in 2023. He said that puts us on par with where the call levels are in Auburn Hills. Member Gurumurthy asked if we have explored the option of adding the City of Novi as one of the sharing cities with the other four. Chief Zinser said that option was not explored, simply because the data suggests we need one co-responder solely for Novi. He also stated that he reached out to other City Police Departments, and they were not interested in a shared co-responder. He offered that if Novi partnered with cities such as Wixom, Walled Lake, Commerce, and White Lake he thinks we would see a similar situation to what Auburn Hills has, and the co-responder would likely spend most of their time in Novi.

Mayor Fischer stated we don't have any grants or any plans to fully absorb if this pilot program works out and the recommendations continue, and this would be an incremental \$115,000 to the budget. Chief Zinser confirmed that was correct. He recommended that staff start to consider different sources of savings. He said not to consider his support for this tonight as a way to start year four, with negative \$115,000. He said it is something that has to be absorbed within the city's budget. He said the staff does a great job at seeking out these types of grants. He said he would like to see this type of program launched in Novi and wanted someone else to help us pay for it. He expressed thanks to the staff and said they did exactly that. He said he wanted to be clear that they are applying for the grant but have no guarantees that we will get it. He said to keep the Council updated, and they will have to make the financial decision if the grant falls through.

**Approval to move forward with a Co-Responder Program with Oakland County Mental Health Network (OCHN) and approval to submit a grant through the Department of Justice to support the cost of the Program and to use Opioid Settlement funds to help offset the City's share of the Program.**

**Roll call vote on CM 24-04-55**

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

**CONSENT AGENDA REMOVALS: None**



**AUDIENCE COMMENT:**

Farah Baig, 23169 Inverness Ct., said she is at the meeting to continue to ask the Council to use their power to bring a resolution declaring an immediate and permanent ceasefire in Gaza. She said the tragedy that has unfolded over the last six months has taken a severe toll on the residents since October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023. She said Care Michigan is an organization that focuses on civil rights abuses and cites that they have logged 496 complaints. She stated this was an all-time high for civil rights intake cases for Care Michigan. Since they were founded in the year 2000, the civil rights that they're referring to are civil rights violations that are anti-Muslim, anti-Arab, and anti-Palestinian. She said this is an all-time high from the year 2000 and post-September 11<sup>th</sup>. She said this means that the war in Gaza is directly impacting our families here in Michigan. She said the silence over the last several months has spoken volumes about the Council's stance on this issue. She asked the Council to go on record and state that they are against genocide, the obliteration of a people, and land grabbing. She asked if the Council could say on the record that they are for the protection of women and children, for upholding the law, and for peace and justice. She said that none of these options seem possible to the Council, and that reflects their humanity. She stated that one day the people on the Council would no longer be there, and asked how they would like to be remembered. She stated that Maya Angelou said, "People forget what you said. People forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." She told the Council that she felt unheard. She said that the members of the community feel like the Council doesn't care and they are making them feel undone with their refusal to speak up.

Farahnaz Ashtiani, 43145 Emerson Way, said she was at the meeting to address the council again regarding Gaza. She said that Novi residents have been addressing the council for months meanwhile there is the killing of innocent people. She said it has not been proportional on both sides, but nevertheless, people have died and suffered so much pain, both from the Palestinian and Israeli sides. She said that there are families who will be injured and disabled for a lifetime, losing all hopes and dreams for the future. She said many more parents watched their children go hungry while forgetting their own hunger. She said families are enduring separation from their loved ones, and their loved ones are being held captive, not knowing whether they will be seen alive again or not. She said we have watched bombs being poured on them and they don't know what is happening. She said innocent children playing on the playground have been attacked and killed trying to enjoy what was left of their innocence and childhood. She said during this time there were many opportunities missed to call for a ceasefire. She added that whether or not a resolution would have helped does not really matter. She said she cannot comprehend why it is so hard for human beings to advocate for peace. She said they are not asking for a ceasefire on one side or the other, but one resolution to allow peace to be able to resolve the situation without so many human casualties and loss of innocent lives. She reminded everyone that this has a huge impact on our environment, with all the explosions and the chemicals being used. She asked why it is difficult for us as citizens of this world, human beings, parents, daughters, mothers, sons, and whatever to

want everybody to live in peace. She asked the Council if they believed the true way to peace was through the loss of innocent lives and mass killings.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

1. Older Adult Needs Committee

Mayor Pro Tem Casey said at the last meeting, they continued to talk through what advocacy looks like from a committee perspective. She said there is more information to come. She said the next two meetings are on April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024. She advised to check the city calendar for the location.

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL ISSUES: None**

**COMMUNICATIONS: None**

**ADJOURNMENT** – There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned at 7:44 P.M.

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Cortney Hanson, City Clerk

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Justin Fischer, Mayor

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Transcribed by Alyssa Craigie,  
Administrative Assistant

Date approved: May 6, 2024