

CITY OF NORTON SHORES
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
July 28, 2020

A regular work session of the Norton Shores City Council was held remotely on Tuesday, July 28, 2020 at 5:40 p.m.

Present: Mayor Nelund, Council Members Flanders, Hylland, Jurkas, Morgenstern, Moulatsiotis, and Olson; also, Anthony Chandler, Shelly Stibitz, Doug Hughes, Jim Murphy, Bob Gagnon, Jon Gale, and Mike Huston

1. Street Intersection Camera Project

Lt. Marc VanderStelt presented information supporting purchase and implementation of street intersection cameras at Sternberg/Harvey, Grand Haven/Sternberg/ Grand Haven/Pontaluna, Seaway/Grand Haven and Seaway/Norton for transparency, accountability, officer oversight and evidentiary value. An appropriation in the FY21 Capital Improvement and Tax Increment Finance Authority budgets for purchase, connectivity and support and, following research, the Police Department is recommending purchase of a sole-source system from Avigilon through the MiDeal State purchasing program. Two representatives from Avigilon provided Council members with details related to connectivity, camera operation in inclement weather, life span and the warranty of the equipment and the method for viewing the footage. Council members were informed that the cameras cannot be used as a tool for traffic violations not associated with an accident or criminal act. The contract with Avigilon includes everything required to monitor the intersections selected with a 5-year warranty and three years of connectivity. Council Member Hylland believes the system and recurring costs for connectivity in years four and five is too high for what he feels will be a small return. Council Member Morgenstern feels the three years will provide a good idea of what the value of the return will be. Council's consensus was to move forward with the equipment purchase and contract.

2. Communications/Marketing Plan Budget

Administrative Services Director/Assistant to the City Administrator Anthony Chandler gave Council members an overview of the communications and marketing proposal to move forward with the marketing theme chosen at the July 14, 2020 special meeting. The first steps would be establishing the visual and non-visual Norton Shores brand and development of an email list of residents, business owners and visitors with Revel as the City's advisor and contractor. Council Member Morgenstern was pleased with the proposal and asked if we can reduce costs by taking advantage of City staff's skillset for photo/videography and concentrate more on a social media overhaul. Mr. Chandler responded that the photography budget is an estimate and costs will probably come in under budget and, to ensure that summer photos are included, this aspect of the campaign should be initiated soon. He stated that a small social media overhaul could be accomplished in the initial phase by redirecting the funds approved for creation and

mailing of a City newsletter. Council Member Hylland asked how confident we can be that the \$55,000 budget will be sufficient when it was based on all low investment choices. Council Members Moulatsiotis and Morgenstern questions having two website and Mr. Chandler said that it was strongly advised by Revel. Council Member Flanders asked about incentives for website visitors for signing up and use of Business Registration emails was discussed. City Administrator Mark Meyers clarified that the project will consist of a new marketing logo, similar to but not replacing, our current logo and the City will have the ability to ask for another design if not happy with the one presented. The new website host will be chosen following the bid process, hopefully by the end of this year, and Mr. Meyers said that Revel's timeline for the communication and marketing plan would be shared with Council. Council members agreed to keep the process moving along.

General Comments

Council Member Olson read a prepared statement (attached) regarding Mona Shores School Board's adoption of a resolution related to the Black Lives Matter movement after being inundated with complaints from constituents. The resolution contains a paragraph stating that the City had a historic pattern of endemic racist housing policies, restrictive covenants and intentional urban planning that prevented people of color from even entering white spaces, let alone establishing themselves in the city in any permanent way. After reading his statement, Council Member Olson said that he was made aware of other information that made him seriously question the Board's direction and has received documents, following FOIA requests, that have only enhanced his concerns. Mayor Nelund shared that he, Mr. Meyers, School Board President Stan Miller and School Superintendent Bill O'Brien met earlier that day regarding this issue. During the meeting, the Mayor and Mr. Meyers strongly advocated their position to amend paragraph three of the resolution and, specifically the language, 'intentional urban planning'. School representatives understood the City's point and said they would talk as a Board and may, at some point in the future, bring the suggestion to a formal open meeting for consideration to amend paragraph three of the resolution. The Mayor is encouraged that they are open to speaking as a Board and reconsidering the language. Council Member Morgenstern described a planned low-income housing development on Seminole Road in early 1980 that never happened and suggested support for the City may be found by researching details of the proposed project.

Mr. Meyers reminded everyone that the next Council meeting will be on Monday due to the Tuesday, August 4 State Primary Election. Mayor Nelund relayed that it appears public meetings will continue remotely for the foreseeable future.

Meeting adjourned at 6:41 p.m.

Shelly Stibitz, City Clerk

While the topic is not on tonight's agenda, I informed Mayor Nelund that I would likely make a statement about the recent issues regarding the School Board. I've prepared a written statement that I wish to read and put on the record.

Over the past 10 days, I've have been inundated with calls, messages and letters from my constituents who are VERY upset with the School Board's recent passage of its BLM resolution. One portion that many of them take issue with, and that I object to as a City leader and member of this Council, is Paragraph 3. For those who are not familiar with this paragraph, it states:

WHEREAS Mona Shores' growth as a primarily white school district occurred as a result of endemic racist housing policies, restrictive covenants, and intentional urban planning that prevented people of color from even entering white spaces, let alone establishing themselves in the city in any permanent way. This historic pattern must be recognized.

Initially, I gave the School Board the benefit of the doubt and assumed that maybe this paragraph just slipped its way in and not much thought was given to its inclusion as it highly defamatory to the City and its voters. However, a review of the School Board minutes from its June 29 meeting clearly indicate that was not the case. In fact, Board President Stan Miller initially moved to strike the entire paragraph. That motion was seconded but then was defeated 6-0. Yes, while initially moving to strike the paragraph, Mr. Miller then voted to deny his own motion. A motion was then made to amend the language and that passed 6-0. Further, I learned this past weekend that many other School representatives had their hand in this resolution and Paragraph 3. These representatives include those from the Diversity & Inclusion Committee as well as Superintendent Bill O'Brien. Make no mistake about it, the inclusion of this paragraph was deliberate and intentional. Further, it is important to note that it was done without any discussion with any City staff or representative. If they thought that this highly incendiary language would go unchallenged, they were sorely mistaken.

Mayor Nelund, on behalf of himself and several Council members, requested that the School Board provide evidence supporting these assertions regarding the City's past or rescind the paragraph. This Council also invited Board President Miller to this meeting tonight to present us with the Board's evidence and provide an

explanation. One would have expected that Mr. Miller to jump at that opportunity as he has told the City that the Board “stands behind” the resolution, he sent out the blast email to all District parents with the resolution and didn’t hesitate to appear before the TV camera and be interviewed by WZZM a couple weeks ago to boast about the resolution. However, he declined our invitation as he didn’t think that a such an appearance would “best serve” the City, District, or our shared constituents. His refusal to appear before this Council to stand behind the resolution, and specifically Paragraph 3, is telling. He refuses to address the City and its citizens that he and the Board defamed without a shred of evidence. He cannot hide behind the resolution or in “private meetings” with hand-selected City representatives. Rather, it is time to face this Council and the countless constituents, taxpayers and voters who are very upset, and rightfully so. If the Board “stands behind” the resolution, as Mr. Miller contends, then he should be standing before this Council and be ready to answer tough questions.

Accordingly, I invite Board President Miller to reconsider and appear before this Council to answer questions and provide any and all evidence that supports Paragraph 3. Short of providing such evidence, it is incumbent on the Board to rescind in full Paragraph 3. This Council and the School Board have worked together well in the past, including a joint meeting last October. However, I believe that the School Board’s reckless passing of this resolution, in which it has defamed this City, places that relationship in serious jeopardy unless the Board promptly rectifies it.

On a related note, School Board member Wesley Wilson has proudly posted about drafting the BML resolution. This is the same Board member who, in a recent FB post, also made it clear that his next target is removing our police from the schools. When he got caught and I exposed his dangerous agenda this past weekend and invited my constituents to the August 10 school board meeting to voice their feelings about the Board and the direction it seems to be headed, he quickly removed the post. As I said in my FB post, our police are a valuable resource and great tool in our schools. To remove them, as School Board member Wilson suggests, would be ludicrous and will put our children at risk. I proudly wear the uniform and stand behind my brothers and sisters in blue who put their life on the line to protect you every day. I want to commend Chief Gale and all of our City’s police officers. Thank you for everything that you do and rest assured, I will do everything in my power to ensure that the police are not pulled out of our schools.