MEETING MINUTES
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
Monday, November 4, 2013
7:30 p.m.
Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Avenue, Council Chambers

Members Present:  Alderman Burrus, Alderman Braithwaite Alderman Grover, Alderman Fiske,
Alderman Holmes, Alderman Tendam

Members Absent:  None

Staff Present:  Wally Bobkiewicz, Chief Richard Eddington, Henry Ford,
Joseph McRae, Melissa Parker, Jonathan William-Tinsel

Presiding Member:  Alderman Holmes

I. CALL TO ORDER / DECLARATION OF QUORUM
With a quorum present, Madam Chair Holmes called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 16, 2013 AMENDED
APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 7, 2013
Alderman Tendam moved approval of the September 16, 2013 amended minutes. Alderman
Braithwaite seconded. A voice vote was taken to approve the September 16 amended minutes and
approved 6-0.

Alderman Tendam moved approval of the October 7, 2013 minutes. Alderman Braithwaite seconded.
A voice vote was taken to approve the October 7, 2013 minutes and approved 6-0.

III. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION
HH1 School Safety Resolution

Citizen Comments
Ms. Betty Ester stated that she is thankful for letting the state law prevail in our neighborhood around
ETHS, District 202. However, the damage to the neighborhood has already been done. It has been
painted as a neighborhood of high crimes and there has never been that much attention given to this
area. The high school has many incidents of crime. The neighborhood has many seniors and they are
not worried about crime. The ordinance contains many items that are already in place. The only
somewhat new item is the addition of more lights on Church Street but we have been asking for new
lights for a long time.

Alderman Grover indicated that the implementation of the safe school zone statute began a year ago in
spirit of cooperation with the schools and the City. It was thought at the time that this statute, a criminal
trespass statute, required an intergovernmental agreement, in this case, with District 202 and the City of
Evanston. She gave an overview of two major points that have changed. The first being the realization
that the statute took effect in 2012 by state law and it applies to every school in Evanston. The second
item is that the state statute has been implemented in the location that it began which is in Champaign. Alderman Grover has spoken with staff from the State Senator’s Office and Chief Cob of Champaign and they have been implementing it without the need of an intergovernmental agreement. It has been implemented in a way that was compatible with the City and the Schools’ goals ensuring the safety of residents, staff and students in and around the school campus. Alderman Grover proposed to continue to work on all of the issues that the City and the schools have been working in regards to school safety and for the time being keep it in committee and hold in committee any formal implementation from the City to allow the police and the school work hand in hand to do what they do best at ETHS. If we find that the implementation of the state designated safe school zone doesn’t work for us then we explore through the State Senator an amendment of the safe school zone statute so it works for Evanston or we find a different way of retooling it for it to work in our school. It has been a long process and she regrets, as Ms. Ester does, all of the negative discussion in regards to the neighborhood. She hopes the community doesn’t think or expect that the state statute creates and impervious barrier around the school to prevent anything from happening. The state has required us to make our school zone safer and protect those who operate within them. Alderman Grover suggested to keep this item in Committee and the ordinance that was provided was in a draft form for the preliminary thought process of implementing the state law as it has passed.

Alderman Holmes thanked Alderman Grover for putting it into a form that everyone could see because these things are already happening but it needed to be brought to their attention in this format.

Alderman Grover indicated that it should be kept in Committee and be revisited as necessary and Alderman Holmes approved the recommendation.

IV. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

HH2 Review of Police Complaints

Alderman Grover moved to accept. Alderman Tendam seconded. A voice vote was taken to accept the review of Police Complaints and approved 6-0.

HH3 Update on Harley-Clarke Mansion

Citizens Comments

Mr. Jerome Heusman expressed that there is a problem because the Harley Clarke Mansion is in need of repair. The City owns the building and it has sat by while things have continued to fall apart. The EAC has functioned as best as they could without complaint. He reiterated the value of the program that was made known by residents at the last HSC Meeting. He specified that it has been clear that we don’t want it to become of commercial interest. It should continue to serve our citizens and the City should be responsible to uphold the esthetic well-being of our community. The EAC wants to do more and they can do more and there should be a focus of a renewed effort to affirm the EAC’s occupancy of the Harley Clarke Mansion.

Ms. Diane Thodos shared that she has been to other places as a visual artist for art education and have come back to the EAC for very specific reasons. The far reaching aspects of culture in our community were acknowledged by people in other cities. Her family is heavily involved in the arts and all of the roots came from the City of Evanston. She went to NYC to work in galleries but came back to EAC to develop. She expressed concern that commercial values will trump communal values and we will lose our identity. It cannot be sacrificed because it is deeply in our roots. Please support communal values over commercial values. The EAC is something we cannot sacrifice.

Mr. Junad Rizki stated that he has investigated the property and there are two park districts there and it’s not integrated. While the EAC might be a good use, the Coastal Agency could integrate the site into public use. If the EAC cannot come up with the financial benefits but the Coastal Agency could, with
the public benefit in mind, the EAC may have to look at other options. He suggested that the Committee pursue both options. The City would have to provide millions of dollars to fix Harley Clarke.

Ms. Sarah Kaiser communicated that she is a teaching artist at the EAC. She has made connections, students, new patrons, and new friends. She understands that in these hard times we are focused on the bottom line but she hopes we can focus on the community. Ironically, the arts can boost the economy if businesses team up with the arts. If we focus on these connections instead of marketing to a private entity that is what the people of the City want. The EAC is on a public space and should be used for public use. If we want to keep the name of Evanston as a cultural diversity then we need to keep EAC.

Ms. Nora Diedrich, Director of the Evanston Art Center, provided an update on their progress over the last 30 days. There was paperwork and a list of items provided in the packet. She highlighted a few items; Chicago Kiln service came in and put an addition shut off box in the kiln room which was an item that Captain Novak had requested. She said they had investigated two duct work cleaning organizations and the General Ductwork Cleaners inspected the ductwork of the kiln and will be coming in to clean it next week. She stated that there was one change on the items provided to the Committee and they have signed an agreement with IFF Real Estate Services which has been sent to them for a co-signature. In addition to the completion of items they asked the Committee to consider permission to come back to the December meeting or January meeting for a final update.

Alderman Braithwaite asked if they are paying for the contract on page 55 of the packet which indicated that IFF Real Estate will provide an assessment of the condition of the building, code and ADA compliance, structural, mechanical, electrical, plumbing and roof of the building. IFF is asked to prepare a detailed cost estimate for both short-and long-term facility improvements.

Nora replied that they are paying over $6,000.

Mr. Wally Bobkiewicz specified that documentation was included in the packet for the Harley Clarke Mansion update on page 50 of the packet. There were continued conversations with the Evanston Arts Center that were addressed at this meeting by the EAC and included in the documents was a letter from them dated November 1, 2013. The new information presented was that there has been communication with the Illinois of Department of Natural Resources who has an interest in the property. Mr. Bobkiewicz said it was a non-solicited call with no previous contact but they reached out and he spoke with the Chief of Staff, Todd Main and their Director of the Coast Management program. They spoke by phone several times and then came out to visit the facility. From the discussion they were very excited and from that they sent the letter dated October 18, 2013, included in the packet, to show they were interested in moving forward. The question before the Committee is what should be the appropriate next steps? If the Committee is interested in considering the request from the IDNR then it would appropriate to move it to full Council for approval.

Alderman Grover voiced that it would be unwise for us not to ask the City Manager to bring it back to full City Council and to see if this option is more compatible for the community’s hopes and desires for the space. Alderman Grover formally moved to send it to City Council for further discussion. Alderman Burris seconded.

Alderman Burris agreed with Alderman Grover comments and to move forward with an agency that can take on the maintenance and would not use tax dollars. She expressed her extreme concern of the liability of the building. She was extremely critical of the condition of the basement and electrical cords and was concerned about the access in and out if something were to happen. She requested that the City Attorney look into the liability issue. There may be massive liability for the City because there is a real problem and we have not done anything to make sure EAC takes care of it.
Alderman Tendam asked Mr. Bobkiewicz if the fire department has had oversight to make sure the building is safe for use. Mr. Bobkiewicz responded that they have. Alderman Tandam's opinion of the building was not as drastic as Alderman Burris because of his artistic background. He noted that he doesn’t want the opinion out there that it is a dangerous place as it is an injustice to the EAC.

Mr. Bobkiewicz sited that it is not a dangerous place but it is important to note that there are issues that need to be addressed. The bottom line is that enough time has passed that we need to do something.

Alderman Tendam agreed with Mr. Bobkiewicz but noted that we sent the EAC in a direction and do we move forward with the next thing that comes along. He proposed to give them the time that they requested and we had agreed to give them. He then asked Mr. Bobkiewicz if the IDNR has looked into other options for space.

Mr. Bobkiewicz replied that they have and have not been able to find something and especially on the lakeshore.

Alderman Fiske shared that she had positive experiences with EAC. She took the tour and was amazed at how solid the building is. Sure we could overcome the issues but she is ensure how much money the EAC has to put into it and the City doesn’t have the money. She pointed on that things should be made equitable to Noyes where the tenants pay rent. She was fascinated with Coastal Management interest and agreed that it would be better served to take it to Council.

Alderman Braithwaite also agreed that we are in an ambiguous situation. Part of his concern is the need for repairs and we have someone who is looking to take that on. As long as we are transparent about it with the EAC and agreed to move forward with the IDNR to go to Council. Alderman Braithwaite asked Mr. Bobkiewicz how the City will keep people informed.

Mr. Bobkiewicz indicated that a list serve has been created that sends out the agenda of the Committee to those that sign up for it and have heard appreciation for having that available. Plus the Evanston media will continue to cover the situation.

Alderman Holmes stated that we have demonstrated that we care about the Arts but doesn’t want people to be somewhere unsafe. We know we don’t have the money to put into the renovation and ongoing maintenance of the building which will be a factor when making a decision. We should move it to council and make a decision.

Alderman Grover wanted everyone to be mindful that the EAC is an ongoing operation and to be careful not to undermine the people and programs there. Whether or not they stay at this location or find a different home she wants there to be the EAC. She believes the EAC has already taken a hit from the repercussions of this discussion and does not want them to be undermined. She indicated she wants an EAC five years from now. She then asked Mr. Bobkiewicz if the timing with IDNR is compatible with the timing of allowing the EAC to continue its due diligence.

Mr. Bobkiewicz assured everyone that the IDNR understand the sensitivity around the subject and don’t want to come unwelcomed. The question for the Council is if we should communicate with IDNR as well as EAC. IDNR would like to have a community meeting and practically speaking could not happen until January. He believes it would be appropriate to hear from EAC in January and the IDNR in February and move from there.

Alderman Burrus reiterated her concern about the safety of the building. She stated there are severe safety issues, including what she believes is lead paint, and doesn’t want the Committee to ignore those problems. Where is the EAC going to get the money to maintain the building? They haven’t.
Has the EAC offered to purchase the building and if not, why not? If they want full responsibility then why aren’t we giving them full responsibility?

Mr. Bobkiewicz replied first to the question about the EAC taking over the full responsibility of the building and in his discussions they are evaluating the building in terms of what makes sense to them. A purchase of the building and a longer term lease of the building is something they are evaluating. He repeated that the building has been evaluated and gone through with City inspections and they have made recommendation for maintenance. They have not indicated that it is inhabitable. In regards to the lead based paint in the fog houses are two buildings adjacent to the EAC and not used by them. The paint is not a danger. The city staff believes it is safe for occupancy and if it wasn’t we would convey it. He stated it is all the more urgency to move forward in the direction of the future use of the building.

A voice vote was taken to move this item to the full City Council and it was approved 6-0.

Ms. Diedrich requested that the Committee and Chairman Holmes allow Mr. Barrack Echols to respond to the extremely damaging comments by Alderman Burrus for at least two minutes. Mr. Echols is the pro bono counsel from Kirkland and Ellis.

Alderman Holmes granted Ms. Diedrich’s request and allowed for three minutes to speak in response.

Mr. Echols, Attorney with Kirkland and Ellis law firm, echoed the comment by Alderman Grover made that it is very important not to undercut the mission of the EAC. Regardless of where the EAC ends up we need to make sure that people know they can send their children and students there. It is a wonderful, viable place that is full of culture. It is an old building but as the City Manager stated it is safe and has been inspected by the City inspectors, including the electrical. The EAC has taken the recommendation of Captain Novak from the Fire Department. He wanted to ensure that there is no suggestion in the press or elsewhere that the building is not safe for operation and it cannot continue in its mission and to serve the community. The EAC has made it clear that it is very willing to work with this Committee and the City Council to work to find a resolution cooperatively.

Alderman Holmes reiterated that we cannot overlook that fact that there are some issues that will have to be addressed and all the supporters of the EAC need to take that into consideration as well.

Alderman Burris commented that she has no issue with the EAC or the arts but is worried about the liability issues for the City of Evanston. It is her judiciary responsibility to look at the safety of the residences and to ask those questions to protect the city because most people won’t.

V. TOWNSHIP OF EVANSTON

HHT4 Assessor Bonnie Wilson’s Report

See attached document provided by Ms. Bonnie Wilson.

HHT5 Township Monthly Bills

Alderman Grover moved approval, Alderman Tendam Seconded.

Alderman Holmes indicated that she had asked the former supervisor for a contract with Ms. Vance as there was a consulting bill at the last meeting for $550 and now there another bill for $2,000. She expressed concern because there was no backup of a written contract from former Supervisor Gasperd.

Mr. Bobkiewicz responded that there was no written contract but believes an oral one does based on his review of the situation. He recommended making the payment. He also said that Ms. Vance has been notified that her services are no longer needed.
Alderman Holmes asked about the negotiations with the $17,000 Sun-Times bill and that is why it was held in the Committee. She asked if there was any backup information in regards to that bill.

Mr. Bobkiewicz answered that from the best he could tell it was a personnel matter within the Township and the order was placed lawfully and a debt owed by the Township of Evanston.

A voice vote was taken to approve the Township monthly bills and it was approved 6-0.

HHT6 Proposed FY14 Town of Evanston Budget Update

Mr. Bobkiewicz stated that there has been a lot of work done on the budget and he is not satisfied that it can't be balanced within the levy. The Township has taken quite a bit of money from the fund balance over the past 24 months. A lot of this goes with the transition and changes that have been made especially in the supervisor’s office and he is able to peel away some of the consultant contracts. The community services line includes a lot of miscellaneous things that he would like to reduce or eliminate. He believes the support for the Mental Health Board is important but the request that they made to this Committee are two different numbers and that has to be rectified. There is a budget ordinance in the City Clerk’s office which fulfills the code requirement of the state law. The two options are to have a special meeting sometime in November or to hold the Township budget until December and then take it to the Town Board meeting on December 11th.

Alderman Holmes asked that Mr. Bobkiewicz share some of the other miscellaneous items. The reason for the question is because those programs are designed to serve citizens in a whole different way.

Mr. Bobkiewicz said he would certainly provide that information. One of the examples cited was the cost for Veterans flags. Those will be laid out and it will be up to the Committee to determine what is appropriate to fund. They are also going through some of the miscellaneous operating expenses.

Alderman Holmes appreciated his due diligence but is leery of the dissolvent of the Township because there were programs provided that people weren’t even aware of. She also indicated that the Veterans flags were important for the graves on Memorial Day which no one else pays for.

Alderman Braithwaite directed toward Mr. Bobkiewicz that in the Rules Committee he proposed a little over $200,000 in proposed savings but he hears that we are cutting services. Can he project what the cost savings would be? His concern is that Mr. Bobkiewicz is making decisions that will eliminate services so his additional questions were: are you communications with the organizations that will be effected by the budget cuts and secondly will there be a detailed explanation as to why these cuts are being made?

Mr. Bobkiewicz replied that the $225,000 in savings is if the Township is dissolved. The budget that will be presented to the Committee will be if the Township is not dissolved. At this time he does not have a final budget to give to the Committee. He is trying to get as much insight into the process as possible and to be as transparent as possible. When a budget is present it won’t be focused on the community services piece and it will be the Council that should determine the cost associated with those programs. He would like to shed light on the expenses.

Alderman Braithwaite indicated that the first item Mr. Bobkiewicz mentioned was cuts in the Mental Health Board.

Mr. Bobkiewicz clarified that in the Township budget there will not be a change in their contribution to the Mental Health Board. The Mental Health Board has recommended an increase above and beyond what they received in previous year. If the Township piece remains the same he would not recommend that the additional funds come from the Township but rather as General Fund expenditure. He would not agree to approve the Mental Health Board budget and to come to grips with the Mental Health Board contributions. How much do we want to spend on these organizations?

Alderman Grover agreed that the contribution from the Township to the Mental Health Board should be the same and appreciated the clarification that other additional expenditures would be funded through the City if possible.
Citizens Comments

Seth Green, Executive Director at Y.O.U. specified the importance of the Mental Health Budget to their budget as it is 3 to 4% of their funding. It is a core to their funding and by receiving the support from the City it can leverages other funding opportunities, which is over $3 million dollars. He indicated that they are hoping for a greater investment this next year.

Alderman Braithwaite asked Mr. Green if the funding they receive are used to target a specific population or is it in their general funds.

Mr. Green replied that many groups do it differently. Y.O.U takes a different approach by using their funds to leverage for other federal grants. When they do that they are able to tell the federal granters that their facilities and administration is covered and their funding would go directly to the direct service programming. They are able to get more money by using this strategy.

Ms Sandi Johnson is a Member of the Mental Health Board. She stated that she was happy to have the City Manager shed some light on the budget. She stated that she hopes that if there is any cut in the budget that there would be a talk with the Mental Health Board and have a good understanding of the agencies that would be lost as a result. We are concerned about the fact that on page 95 on the budget there is a list of organizations and some agencies that are on there that did not request funding and there are two agencies that had requested money but were omitted.

Mr. Bobkiewicz indicated that he would try to attend the next Mental Health Board meeting as a request by Alderman Braithwaite to discuss the budget with them.

Ms. Debbie Shuluf, represented Shore Community Services, spoke in support for the Mental Health Board. They have received funding from the Board for many years and help provide support to their most vulnerable population.

Ms. Betty Ester asked for clarification about the funds that are coming through the City of Evanston and the Township. Does the budget for the Township go through March since that is when a decision will be made about the future of the Township?

Mr. Bobkiewicz responded that the Township is for the full FY14. The Mental Health Board will receive money from the Township and the City’s General Fund. He proposed that if the Township is dissolved then it would come from one source which would be a General Assistance Levy on the tax bill. One of the challenges with the current allocation process is that the budget is not set ahead of time.

Alderman Braithwaite emphasized that during this transition that it is really important to keep the services for the neediest residents. He wants to ensure that decisions are made not on a dollar amount but understanding how those programs impacts the community.

Wally – there is a human heart in every employee and I hope that you see there is a human heart in him too.

Alderman Holmes indicated that there should be a budget by December 4th.

VI. COMMUNICATION

VII. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved and seconded for adjournment at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,
Melissa Parker
Administrative Secretary, City Manager’s Office
To: Evanston Township Board of Trustees

From: Bonnie Wilson CIAO,Evanston Township Assessor

Re: Update on Evanston Township Assessor office.

Date: November 4, 2013

In October my office returned corrections of property tax bills for missed exemptions totaling $4,851.08. This brings the total dollar amount returned to Evanston taxpayers since April 1, 2013 to $172,329.85.

Corrections can still be made as far back as 2009 taxes that were paid in 2010. If you think you have missed an exemption or have never applied for an exemption, please contact my office to see what exemptions you are eligible for and have not received. Especially a senior or homeowners exemptions.

Anyone receiving property tax exemptions on more than one property has until December 31, 2013 to contact the Cook county Assessor’s office to repay the exemptions received erroneously. However after January 1, 2014 a new state law takes effect allowing the Cook County Assessor the ability to recoup taxes, penalties and interest on incorrectly received property tax exemptions by placing leans on the said properties. If you correct these exemptions before December 31 there will be no penalties.

Please call the Evanston Township Assessor’s office and we will be able to help you with these exemptions.

For those taxpayers that appealed their assessments through the Board of Review in August. The Board of Review has completed their hearings. If you have filed for an appeal you should be getting a letter from the Board of Review sometime soon or in the next few weeks.

The Evanston Township assessor’s office is now located at 2100 Ridge at the Evanston Civic Center Room 1450. Our new phone number is 847-448-8168. We are open Monday thru Friday from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm.

I would also like to ask the Board of Trustees that at your next Ward meetings if you can please make an announcement that the Township has moved to the Civic Center with our new phone numbers. I would be happy to give you flyers and our business cards to have at the next ward meeting.