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

Members Present: Alderman Tendam, Alderman Grover, Alderman Holmes, Alderman Braithwaite, Alderman Fiske
Members Absent: Alderman Burrus
Staff Present: Joseph McRae, Chief Richard Eddington, Henry Ford, Evonda Thomas-Smith, Melissa Parker, Marty Lyons, Kevin Brown
Presiding Member: Alderman Holmes

I. CALL TO ORDER / DECLARATION OF QUORUM

With a quorum present, Madam Chair Holmes called the meeting to order at 7:40 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 16, 2013

Chair Holmes suggested that the meeting minutes from September 16, 2013 did not reflect the actual conversation with the Township of Evanston staff about the General Assistance program and parts had been omitted. Alderman Holmes requested that the minutes be amended and to hold the minutes to be approved at the next meeting.

It was moved and seconded to have the meeting minutes from September 16, 2013 to be amended and approved at the next meeting. A voice vote was taken and this motion was approved 5-0.

III. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

CITIZEN COMMENTS

HH1 - Ms. Betty Ester, stated that most of most of the complaints were done in-house and not submitted to the proper committees. She also stated that one of the complaints appeared to be racial profiling and was concerned that it also did not go to the committee to be reviewed.

HH2 - 21 speakers of all backgrounds including; parents, interns, participants, staff, and teaching artists, all spoke in support of the EAC by how it has positively impacted their lives and its cultural significance to the City of Evanston.

HH3 - Mr. Junad Rizki read the ordinance and the problem he had with this ordinance is that you can’t have a hedge in the front yard over 6ft. high. Most people have high hedges and it was not a safety issue where he lives. What he found in other communities is what the City already enforces, which is residents cannot have you bushes or hedges overhang onto the public sidewalk so people can pass.

HH5 - Ms. Virginia Nugent wanted to point out why it is essential for the Actors Gymnasium to obtain office space on the first floor to address staffing needs and to support the safety of the activities going on their gym. There have grown 20% in past 3 years which has increased their staff size and doesn’t fit the current space. There is no precedence to move them upstairs to room 222. Ms. Nugent brought additional information about the programs in the school which was requested by Alderman Tendam in the last meeting. It is about respect. They have never been late with a payment. Ms. Nugent appreciated the continued engagement with this issue.

Ms. Maggie Weiss addressed the Committee in regards to the information provided by staff in the packet. One of the concerns that came up is that there is some consideration for office space. If in fact the cultural arts
department is able to relocate and if all of the changes that are proposed in the documents presented occur there will be 900 ft. less of space in the building and the percent of space in the building would go from 18% to 13%. If we lose the cultural arts desk it would lose the presence of City staff and the present art organizations in the building have helped when constituents come in. It would be imperative to have building information, parking permits, until it becomes possible to do it online. There needs to be something in the meantime to keep all the people that come and go from the building happy.

IV. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

(HH1) REVIEW OF POLICE COMPLAINTS

Chief Richard Eddington shared that all of the complaints have a process and protocol for all complaints for standing and review which has not changed. Alderman Holmes stated that the racial profiling complaint that Ms. Ester referred to (CR13-10) has only had the divisional review and has not had the other reviews. Once it has completed that cycle it will come to this committee.

Chief Eddington confirmed that there are no finalized complaints in this agenda.

(HH2) UPDATE ON HARLEY-CLARKE MANSION

Evanston Arts Center Presentation By Staff (Presentation Included In Packet)

Ms. Nora Diedrich, 829 Forest Ave, Executive Director of the Evanston Arts Center.

With the support of thousands since founding in 1929, the EAC has grown to be the largest non-profit visual arts organization offering classes, exhibitions, outreach programming, and scholarships across the entire state of Illinois.

The programs have expanded and diversified over the years including the outreach to the Evanston community. A grant was recently received to provide workshops to teachers on visual literacy.

The public programs are free and attended to Evanston residents; they are programs no other arts centers in this area are providing. The EAC has the only metal sculpture studio in the area. No other arts center opens its doors 70 hours a week, 7 days a week. The programs result in over 6,000 registrations and more than 2,100 individual students depend on them for their art education every year. Over 250 artists depend on them to exhibit their work and 65 artist teachers rely on EAC for their income. Evanston Blinks and Goods rely on them for $250,000 in retail revenue. The EAC is mission driven 501 3c with a million dollars of operating expenses with 75% spent on programming and only 10% spent on administration. We have managed the entire operation with four full time people and 2 part-time employees. She challenges anyone to put a monetary value on what they have brought to the City. The arts still feed the soul of this community and the EAC plays a major role in this effort.

Ms. Tess Lickerman, current President of the Board of Trustees for the EAC.

On September 16th the Committee met and left the EAC with the need to come back with regards to whether or not we would like to stay or go at 2603 Sheridan Rd. The answer was they would like to stay. Over the last 2 years they studied their needs and options and believe that staying at the mansion is best for the EAC and Evanston. In 2011 a strategic plan was completed that determined a needed space to expand and grow. 2603 Sheridan Rd and Noyes were considered but they also went into an extensive property search. Using consultants and other information a study showed they would need to raise 2 to 2.5 million dollars to move and identified that their current and growing needs would require a 30,000 sq. feet space. After all of the research they learned that sites for their needs are extremely limited and the timeframe to raise money and move would be 2 to 4 years which is a longer timetable then what the EAC and the City have discussed. The EAC would need to raise a significant amount of money quickly which is beyond their means. The EAC now feels that the best option is to remain at 2603 Sheridan Rd if we can find terms that we both agree on. The City’s support under the previous lease has allowed them to keep costs low and their prices competitive. The EAC is aware the City’s desire to remove themselves of the financial responsibility of the aged building and they are willing to enter a contract that would shift most of the responsibility to the EAC and to embark on a renovation of the mansion to maintain their needs. As an organization of their size and with the limited financial means the EAC is not willing to put money into a building they would not be calling home. Ms. Lickerman
stated that they need to focus efforts on fundraising to save the mansion and to make the vision of an amazing arts facility with new art programs a reality. She proposed a minimum of 60 days to establish the parameters that are satisfactory to the EAC and the City that would enable them the continued tenancy of 2603 Sheridan Rd. It would provide time to review all reports and to work with the City to determine essential improvements that are needed, the cost of those, and a timeline for when they could be completed.

Alderman Fiske asked if they are saying they would work in the existing footprint and would not expand into existing park land.

Ms. Lickerman stated they would be able to renovate or remodel the existing space to fit their needs and by also using the coach house.

Alderman Fiske asked if the Committee’s responsibility is to give direction to the City Manager and have him work with the EAC to review reports and negotiate terms. She also stated that the EAC needs to step up to what the Noyes tenants pay. She moved to give this to the City Manager with the recommendation to negotiate with EAC Board on the points that are on their requests. Alderman Braithwaite seconded for discussion.

Alderman Grover expressed that we find ourselves in a good place after two years to have the EAC move toward their strategic goals and also taking on some of the financial responsibility of the building. There expectations are clearer as to what is needed at that site. Alderman Grover suggested that the next meeting should include an update on the progress of the negotiations and believed it was a fair timeframe request.

Alderman Tendam stated that he does think it is a reasonable request and recommended to staff that we pursue it but has a few concerns. Occupying and maintaining the building is going to require a step up in fundraising because there are some issues there. Alderman Tendam recalled that the EAC’s partial desire to move in the past was to draw a greater diversity in population and emphasized that we should be more inclusive of our city. He supported the plan to move forward with negotiations.

Chair Holmes agreed that it was a reasonable request but added that the timeframe shouldn’t necessarily be defined but left up to the City Manager’s negotiations. She also spoke to Alderman Tendam’s concern about the diversity of the programs and stated that the outreach programs in the community are designed to address that issue as well.

Mr. Joe McCrae stated that staff would be happy to meet with the EAC and provide an update at the next meeting.

The motion had been moved and seconded to pursue the requests of the Evanston Arts Center. A voice vote was taken and this motion was approved 5-0.

(HH3) ORDINANCE 109-0-13: PROPERTY MAINTENANCE REVISIONS FOR HEDGE AND SHRUB HEIGHT

Chair Holmes indicated that she read an article in Evanston Now in regards to this item that staff brought forth this item. Alderman Holmes expressed that staff bring forth items when a reference is made and that she made the reference because it was brought to her attention from residents about the safety of hedges. The question was asked if there is a height regulation for fences, are there regulations for hedges? Staff looked into this question and realized there was no such regulations for hedges but other communities do have them. There is a serious side of this in terms of safety. Hedges can be very high and thick so there is an issue where people can hide behind them. Chair Holmes stated that the references were made to her was not from people driving in cars but people that walk and for safety purposes. Her recommendation would actually be 4ft so people can see over and feel safe when walking. She understands Mr. Rizki’s point that there may be some areas that safety is not a concern. The references did come from areas that were considered unsafe. Everyone has different needs and she was bringing the concerns of her residents to light.
Alderman Tendam expressed concern about this legislation as it is written. We do have other ordinances in place for car safety and visibility but understands that some constituents are concerned about violence but those options are numerous. He was uncertain as to whether this was something that the City can control. He would rather look at brighter lights or illumination in certain areas. He said to restrict hedges and bushes to 6ft wouldn’t make much difference but looking at 4ft is certainly overreaching and would rather look at other ways of dealing with the concern.

Alderman Fiske recommended that it be put in the neighborhood watch or police education component as the way we reach out to our citizens. Can understand why it is being suggested but has received a strong negative response from constituents in her ward and would not be able to support this at this time. Chair Holmes wanted to have a further understanding of the ordinance for the height on fences and doesn’t see a lot of difference between fences and hedges. If not mistaken it can’t be an enclosed fence.

Mr. Henry Ford, Assistant City Attorney, indicated that he believed the zoning of the City Code addresses the fencing requirements and can come back with more information.

Alderman Grover requested that in addition to the fence ordinance provides maybe the follow up would be how do we enforce the ordinance? We regulate our growth in parkways. How do we regulate the parkway when a residence does planting? She wasn’t entirely clear on the language as to which side of the property it was intended for. So we are excluding the side of properties and would only include those home that face the front of the street. She requested more information before making a determination.

Alderman Braithwaite has only heard two complaints from his residences. He requested that we add to the list what other communities have done in the past that would be helpful to understand as well.

Alderman Holmes designated that this item would be held in committee.

(HH4) APPROVAL OF SERVICE AGREEMENT WITH THE MORAN CENTER FOR A CERTIFICATE OF REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Mr. Kevin Brown, Youth and Young Adult Program Manager, recommended the authorization by the City Manager to execute this agreement between the City of Evanston and the Moran Center for youth advocacy to provide legal services to no less than 15 legal residents to secure Certificates of Rehabilitation not to exceed $50,000.

Alderman Grover moved for approval and Alderman Tendam seconded.

Alderman Grover asked what does the Circuit Court require and what are the criteria.

Ms. Kathy Lyons, Executive Directive of the Moran Center, addressed Alderman Grover’s question that there is a whole petition process. Ultimately no one can guarantee that a judge will grant the certificate. A court call will be schedule and we can guarantee that with the support of our attorneys these people will have the best chance of obtaining the certificate. A judge will look at the documentation and it includes essentially the same legal documentation that goes into a petition for clemency for a Governor’s pardon. To be clear they would like to serve a minimum to 15 but would try to do as many people as we can.

Alderman Grover asked what is rehabilitation generally for the Circuit Court Judge.

Ms. Lyons answered the through support of community members and sponsors that they have overcome whatever legal challenges that mar their record. These are people for whom their record can’t be cleared. 25 years later they still can’t get a job even if it was in youthful indiscretion. Certificate of Rehabilitation says they have spent 20 years of life free of criminal activity and community members that will sponsor them. They have records of stability and good conduct that is backed with affidavits. An employer can rely on that Certificate of Rehabilitation if anything were to happen. The ultimate end of the story is employment and housing.

Alderman Braithwaite asked how many students/young adults do you think you will actually impact. Are there any other towns that are looking to do similar programs?
Mr. Brown acknowledged that they are going to address as many individuals as possible given the resources that are given, the minimum is 15, but it will be on a case by case basis as some will be shorter and longer. As far as other communities that are doing similar programs it the Wiley Resource Center in Chicago that is address the same issues.

Ms. Lyons indicated that most of those served will be a much older clientele.
A voice vote was taken and this motion was approved 5-0.

(HH5) AUTHORIZATION OF CITY MANAGER TO EXECUTE SHORT TERM LEASE AGREEMENTS AT NOYES

Alderman Grover moved to approve and Alderman Tendam seconded.

Mr. McRae indicated that they have met with the Noyes Arts council which has the information in the packet. There is an effort to meet the deadlines and clarifying the leases for 2013 and looking at 2014 as well. Alderman Tendam expressed that it is an exciting time for Noyes because letting the artist themselves take hold of the future. They are creative people that will make it work to their advantage and the City advantage. When the City offices move out what will happen to Tim Rose?

Mr. Joe McCrae addressed the question by reporting there is current discussion for all of the staff and where they will be placed.

Alderman Braithwaite requested that the report includes the process and how well the space is being allocating.

Ms. Weis responded that the job was to address everything for 2013. The interim plan would be for Actors Gymnasium would take their staff to 222 as a rental and if the City staff does get out sometime in January then Actors Gymnasium would like to rent room 100. All of the negotiations have been going great and two new clients will be occupying the space. There was also record attendance at last tenant meeting.

Alderman Fiske agreed that there does need to be a presence there for people who are coming in and out of the building so that they have answers and find it to be a welcoming and friendly place. Alderman Tendam questioned if we will ask for money for prior months with the 2013 leases.

Mr. McRae specified that those who have had expired leases have still been paying and then 2014 new leases would be created and in process now. Additional meetings are planned to establish the tenancy requirement will be.

A voice vote was taken to authorize the City Manager to execute the short term lease agreements at Noyes and the motion was approved 5-0.

(HH6) Mental Health Board Report

Ms. Kimberly Fisher, Mental Board Representative, was available on hand to help answer any questions that the committee may have. There is an addition funding increase to the 2014 Budget which is due to adding Northwest Casa to help with rape victims, there are also agencies that are adding additional health staff, and there are a lot of different agencies requesting additional funds. Not all of the agencies that requested additional funding received it.

Alderman Grover moved the approval of Mental Health Board recommendations for community service agreements to purchase services for fiscal year 2014 in the amount of $828,979. Motion was seconded by Alderman Tendam. Alderman Grover asked how many agencies they propose to fund.

Ms. Fisher replied 21 agencies and 23 programs. Alderman Grover believes that the Mental Health Board has the processes in place to vet all of the agencies and are reaching the measurable outcomes that are necessary. Therefore, right now the Mental Health Board is the way to fund these services.
Alderman Fiske while looking at the packet noticed the budget going up about from 2013 to 2014 by $79,000 which was about $5,000 here and there which was even with child care going down. The big concern for her was the housing options going from $32,340 to $60,000 and asked for an explanation.

Ms. Fisher responded that they are looking to increase the number of services and the number of people reached. There is a very long waitlist and looking to push more people into the community and out of INDs. They want to include case management and medical services within facilities. The allocations committee and the board felt that the request was justified. They serve the group in most need and offered to provide the information to back the allocations. Alderman Fiske thought that would be a good idea to have that information and Alderman Grover asked to have the application for housing included as well. Ms. Fisher would include the unduplicated number of people that are served with that money.

Alderman Tendam approved this money and felt it is an excellent way to provide services to the community. The community saves a lot of money for every homeless person that is kept off the street. They are rigorous about vetting and the organizations that are funded touch hundreds of thousands of people lives.

A voice vote was taken for the approval of Mental Health Board recommendations for community service agreements to purchase services for fiscal year 2014 in the amount of $828,979 and it was approved 4 -1.

V. TOWNSHIP OF EVANSTON
(HHT7) ASSESSOR BONNIE WILSON’S REPORT

Assessor Bonnie Wilson shared with the Committee that in September the Assessor’s office helped 7 taxpayers receive corrections from their property tax bills for missed exemptions totaling $7,134. This brings total dollar amount to returned 107 taxpayers to $167,478 since April of 2013. If exemption has been missed residents can still apply.

Attached to the memo that Ms. Wilson brought with her was 2014 Township Assessor Budget. The Assessor’s office has just been moved to the Civic Center at 2100 Ridge Ave. Rm 1450 and the new phone number is 847.448.8168. Open Monday – Friday 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. Ms. Wilson commended Ms. Valerie Wideman for her role in the move that she coordinated.

Chair Holmes asked why they are receiving a separate budget and will it be with the Township Budget when it is provided. This was a difference in the normal process.

Ms. Wilson acknowledged that it was unusual to bring it but wanted them to see it ahead of time and will be included in the Township budget which was developed by Mr. Matt Swentkofske, Ms. Wideman and Ms. Wilson.

Mr. McRae stated that his understanding is that both budgets are ready and will be brought forward with the City’s budget at the same time.

Supervisor Gary Gasperd specified that he has been working with the past supervisor Ms. Pat Vance and identified some adjustments in the budget that was created with the help of Mr. Swentkofske and will be included in the next meeting.

Mr. Marty Lyons indicated that the entire City budget is almost done so the changes that have been mentioned tonight may not be in the budget proposed. He has in his possession a draft of the Township, Assessor, and GA budgets. The entire City budget will be brought forward on Friday. It is a proposed budget and there still two months to make changes if necessary. This year a balanced budget is being proposed in the general fund.

Chair Holmes understood the whole process and wanted to ensure that the township budget will be given to the Human Services Committee first so it should be at the next month meeting. If it is given in the November meeting we should be able to move it that night and then be taken to the second Council meeting in November or first meeting in December.
Alderman Braithwaite identified on the bills list a bill for $17,640 that was listed for advertising and wanted to find out more information about it.

Supervisor Gary Gasperd said that the bill should not have been included and is an error at this point because there is some concern around that bill. The ad has run but requested that to hold on to this and bring it back to the next meeting. He needs to find some clarification with the vendor around the bill and asked for possible consideration at Executive Session.

Mr. Lyons stated that depending on the result of the Supervisor’s research it could qualify for consideration at the Executive Session.

Alderman Braithwaite asked about the job description that was attached to the ad. He is stuck because Supervisor Gasperd wrote the job description which he is not sure was approved and there is now this bill that is attached with it.

Alderman Braithwaite requested that Mr. Grant Ford gets legal to look into it. He also asked if there is any internal process for the Township as well.

Alderman Fiske asked for some further information for the consulting fee bill from Ms. Pat Vance for $550 which was on page 83 of the packet. She also asked if there is going to be an ongoing consulting role and for how many months?

Alderman Braithwaite included a question in regards to if there is a contract outlining the role and fees of the consulting.

Supervisor Gasperd specified there was a misunderstanding with the budget that was helped created with Mr. Swentkofske and he wanted to seek advice from the former Supervisor to identify any errors and help with running the office. He has an ongoing relationship with Ms. Vance and she has helped identified some needs that need to be addressed. He foresees continuing to seek her advice through December and there is not a current contract in place but he can create that if that is being asked of him.

Several Aldermen expressed concern about the lack oversight of the office and the use of consulting with knowledgeable staff on hand that can provide assistance. There was also concern about the timeliness of paying the bills and the approval of ads and positions that were not approved.

Chair Holmes asked for a motion to approve the bill with the exception of the Sun-Times bill listed at $17,640. Alderman Grover moved to approve and Alderman Braithwaite seconded.

A voice vote was taken for the approval the Township bills with the exception of the $17,640 bill to the Sun-Times. It was approved 4 -1.

VI. COMMUNICATION

VII. ADJOURNMENT
It was moved and seconded for adjournment at 10:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,
Melissa Parker
Administrative Secretary, City Manager’s Office