

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NOVI  
SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 2017 AT 8:30 A.M.  
POLICE TRAINING CENTER  
45125 Ten Mile  
Novi, MI 48375**

**Mayor Gatt called the meeting to order at 8:30 A.M.**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ROLL CALL:** Mayor Gatt, Mayor Pro Tem Staudt, Council Members Burke, Casey, Markham, Mutch and Wrobel

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

**CM 17-01-006 Moved by Mutch, seconded by Casey; CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY:**

**To approve the Agenda as presented.**

**Roll call vote on CM 17-01-006**                      **Yeas: Staudt, Burke, Casey, Markham, Mutch, Wrobel, Gatt**  
**Nays: None**

**AUDIENCE COMMENTS** – None

**PURPOSE OF THE MEETING**

Mayor Gatt explained that the purpose of this meeting was to hold the initial City Council goal session meeting. He said they do this every year and it sets the tone for budget discussions in March. It lets staff know what City Council hopes to accomplish and is an important step in the budget process.

1. Initial City Council Member Roundtable Thoughts

Member Markham said her overall impression of budget was that it was pretty standard. She didn't see a lot of new ideas or forward thinking. It was a lot of solidifying what we've done in the past. She said we are a growing community and we have money. We need to be broader in our thinking and we are in a position where we can afford to be. She said the fund balance seemed really high, and she would like to understand why we keep it that high. She wondered if we should be providing more services. She also noted that there was a real jump in the plan in 2020 in terms of how much money is required. It didn't seem like a smooth budget from year to year since all of a sudden it jumps in 2020. She felt they should discuss that. She has heard from residents that they would like to see improved and increased fire support throughout the city, so that should be discussed as well.

Member Casey said she appreciated the residents who have trusted them with the road millage and CIP millage. She said she was looking forward to adding projects knowing we have the funds to make the City the best it can be. She said she has a broad range of interest this year. She would like to talk about how efficient they are

being. She noted they see progress on short term goals, but they don't see any action plan for the long term goals. She would like to see how administration is maintaining the long term goals and planning for them.

Member Burke she he wants to discuss the long term goals as well. He said it would be interested to look back at the history of long term goals and if they came to fruition. He noted there has been some movement in the past year, but he would really like to find out and be assured that they didn't lose sight of previous long term goals.

Member Mutch said he thinks this format has worked well for them. Administration has learned to learn from experience in terms of drafting budgets. He said a few Council members have highlighted the same areas he noticed, like the long term goals. It's easy to lose sight of those. He felt it was important for the health of the City that they keep an eye on those. He said the CIP millage was a game changer because they can move forward on projects that they otherwise wouldn't be able to accommodate. By the voters endorsing that idea, and giving those resources, it really lets them do high quality projects going forward. He said he thinks it's important that they do projects with the funding that are visible to the residents. He said he didn't want to see all the money get spent on behind the scenes projects like the improvements at DPS. He said he would like to highlight visible projects and improve the quality of life. He said he personally wants to look at street lighting. He pointed out that Novi Road is well lit; you can see pedestrians and cars. There are other intersections that may only have a single street light that was installed 40 years ago. He thought some money could be spent there to have a direct impact for residents. He also wants to look at citizen survey and the specific feedback there, since it shows what is important to the residents. He spoke of previous discussions about staffing. He said it was always a challenge to balance immediate needs and future needs. He felt they should do it in a sustainable way but funding positions that are based on a need and affordable in long term. He said there does need to be a better balance in regards to the fund balance. The CIP millage brought more even money into the process. He said he doesn't want to see the CIP millage shifting the costs that would otherwise be picked up in general fund. He saw CIP millage as a way to supplement what they were already spending. He said he doesn't want to end up spending a lot more in CIP because they shifted all the costs. He said they should look at capital projects that have a positive impact on quality of life for residents and sustainability.

Member Wrobel said they have done a great job in providing high level services to residents while keeping a watchful eye on the budget. He thanked City Council and staff for that. He said he wants to look at the Boards and Commissions to determine if they are still relevant and update them to make them current. He would like to see the Rotary Club and Parks Foundation work together to get Rotary Park improvements in the works. He thought they should look at putting an urban park in Main Street area, which would be unique to that area. He also wanted to discuss whether it was the right timing for another try at a Signature Park type development. He said February 2019 will be the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City of Novi. He would like to set up a committee to plan for a festival or some type of large event so the residents can celebrate the success of the city. He wanted to discuss the senior citizen activity center and look at the short

and long term needs there to meet the growing aging population. He discussed the trip to Fishers, Indiana and how they had a business incubator program to help bring new businesses in the city with the eye that they would stay in the community. He said they should talk about doing that in Novi.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said he normally has a laundry list of items to discuss but after ten years, he chose not to do that. He said we really do have an arm around the CIP and other projects. The discussion on the fund balance took him back to ten years ago when the fund balance was 16-17% and they had no idea where the economy was heading. He said they approved a fund balance increase at that time, which helped the City through those tough economic times. He pointed out that we may be sitting at a higher fund balance right now but there are uncertainties. There is extra money due to the CIP millage, but they have to think about the growth of the City and the additional employees. He said look at unfunded pension liabilities for example. For a City of our size, it's only a drop in the bucket. He felt they needed to remain prudent with money. He said the City is in a flux period right now where they have the opportunity to do new things but they are still making up wages that were frozen. He said they need to understand what future operating costs will be. That money could be eroded a lot quicker than they anticipate. He said he was not inclined to spend much of the fund balance until they understand operating costs going forward. He said there is a new president, and we don't know economic reality for the next four years. He said he looked forward to prioritizing today. The CIP Committee put together a good list and the residents will get a good bang for their buck. He said they need to be prudent with how the money is spent and be fiscally conservative. He said that's how Novi became the City it is in the past few years, by making good decisions. He wants to continue with the prudent spending of taxpayers' dollars and be smart about what they do. He felt it was not good to spend fund balance in order to maintain operations.

Mayor Gatt said the past year flew by. This is his 14<sup>th</sup> goal session and the City has come a long way. He said it makes him happy to hear the discussion because they are talking about having extra money and extra fund balance which many communities would love to have. There is a fine balance between spending and saving. We have to be prudent, careful, and anticipatory. They should look into the future to think about what could happen. The fund balance is really not a whole lot of money. The City has a AAA bond rating because we have a healthy, robust economic outlook on the way we spend money and save money. He said he would proceed with caution before spending the fund balance. He thanked the voters for passing the CIP millage. He said it made the process easier. He said he agreed with Member Mutch about blending the general fund with money from the CIP millage. He said Novi is a growing City and in order to maintain our #1 rating, they have to think about safety, meaning Police, Fire and DPS. He spoke of department staffing and mentioned we are below staffing numbers from before the recession. He said it would be prudent to get back up to those numbers since we have grown in population and businesses. He would also like to see attention paid to planning the Ring Road near Novi Road and Grand River. He said that intersection becomes more dangerous every day. They have held out on waiting for businesses to come in and help pay for it, but maybe a Special Assessment District there would be worth exploring in order to have the current businesses help pay

for it. He said revitalizing Main Street was a goal of his. He said they are poised to see some activity there soon and wants to partner with developers there to get that built. He said they should worry about small things like color of brick, just focus on getting that area thriving again. He said he also wanted to be more assertive with the Adell property. He said Adell is willing and able to do what they want to do and he wants that property developed.

2. Early Budget Input Work Session

There was discussion of both long and short term goals for each of the four categories. Council then ranked the top goals (see attached).

**ADJOURNMENT** – There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned at 10:12 A.M.

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Cortney Hanson, City Clerk

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Robert J. Gatt, Mayor

Date approved: January 23, 2017