

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NOVI  
MONDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2023 AT 7:00 P.M.**

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

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ROLL CALL:** Mayor Gatt, Mayor Pro Tem Staudt, Council Members Casey, Crawford, Fischer, Smith, Thomas

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

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Mayor Gatt noted that under Presentations, we have one presentation on the agenda, he wanted to add a second. He said we were very honored that evening to have members of the Novi Robotics Team here. He said they are sixth graders and eighth graders here with their parents. He stated we are one of only two classes from Oakland County that went to Houston last year for some competition. He said they are hosting the Competitive Robotics Association (OCCRA) meeting with other teams in Oakland County coming up, and they wanted to talk to us tonight. He wanted to give them the time to do so, so we are going to move them up to a presentation where they can talk for hours if they wish to.

**CM 23-10-127 Moved by Fischer, seconded by Casey; CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**To approve the Agenda as amended.**

**Roll call vote on CM 23-10-127**                      **Yeas: Staudt, Casey, Crawford, Fischer, Smith, Thomas, Gatt**  
**Nays: None**

**PUBLIC HEARINGS: None**

**PRESENTATIONS:**

1. Recognition of the Novi Highschool Baseball team, 2023 Division 1 State Champions

Mayor Gatt commented that Novi is a city of champions. Isn't Novi the best, he has been saying it now for 12 years as your Mayor. He said Novi is the best city in the state of Michigan, maybe the whole country, the whole world. He said we have with us tonight the Novi Robotics Team that he talked about, a group of young men here with their parents and their coaches who did Novi proud this past summer. He stated they are, beyond a doubt, the most exciting baseball team this side of Comerica Park, they are a team that proved to the world that Novi is the very best. He asked if he could have the Coach's and Athletic Director come down to the podium. He said he did not want to tell the story, he was listening to that last game on the radio, and he was scared because they were behind in the later innings. He thought, well, this is the end of our quest, but he was wrong. He said he would let the coaches tell the story.

Don Watchowski said he was the athletic director at Novi. He thanked the Mayor and echoed his statements. He stated it was an incredible season. He said our entire community that got behind them, great parents, great players and ultimately, under Coach Green's leadership they came together and had one of the greatest finishes that many of us can remember. He didn't think people quite understood how difficult it is to win a state championship. He explained that for them to do so they had to win seven games in a row starting at our district semifinal level where they defeated Livonia Stevenson 13-4. He said the next game was our district final game where we beat Catholic Central 4-2. Following that, they entered regional play and our regional semifinal victory we defeated Northville, 6-2. That one always stands out a little louder than our regional final we defeated Hartland 4-0. Our next step is the coaches and boys continued to compete at an incredibly high level was our quarter final victory where they defeated Battle Creek Lakeview 12-2. He said then the game that the Mayor was referencing. He said they went up to East Lansing, competed in the MHSAA Division one state semifinals and they defeated Mattawan 4-1 in 10 innings. He said that was an incredible victory. In fact, at one point we were down to our last out and he believed it was a 3-2 count with the tie in run on second base. He said that one of our seniors, Chappie Alex Czapski, stepped up and hit a base hit, tied the game, we ended up winning in extra innings. He said it was an incredible game that any of us will remember for the rest of our lives. He said they finally competed against an honorable opponent in Woodhaven and the MHSAA Division-1 state finals in front of a packed crowd and they were able to win the State Championship eight to three, so just an incredible run, it was an amazing season. He handed it over to coach Rick Green, but he wanted to make sure that he let everybody know too that this was Coach's 24<sup>th</sup> season at the helm of Novi baseball and in addition, he also throughout the season earned his 500<sup>th</sup> win, so he handed the podium to Coach Green.

Coach Green thanked the Mayor and City Council for having them, it was a great honor to be here. He said it was exciting and he wanted to thank the community also. He said it was unbelievable. He said he was going to choke u a little bit here, but the 500th win.

Coach Green reiterated what Mr. Watchowski said previously, it was incredible, but he didn't win one of those ballgames, it was all these guys right here that did all the work. He said they guided them a little bit and they did most of the work so this is a great honor, and he was happy to be there. Once again, the community was behind us the whole time and they congratulations that he has been receiving over the last two or three months has been incredible. He said guys that played back in 1992 were calling him up, one was at the airport in Dallas that day when it was 3-2, when it was 1-1 in the tenth inning, he let out a big scream in the airport and people were just staring him like what is going on with this guy. He was a post grad, so this championship was all to enjoy, not just these guys, but all the other players in the past. He said these guys were incredible this year, a lot of great athletes and he has a lot of them coming back so hopefully we can do the same again this year. He thanked everybody for having them.

Mayor Gatt recognized all the players of the Novi Wildcats Varsity Baseball Team and said these kids are going to change the world for the better. Thank you.

## 2. Novi Robotics Team

Mayor Gatt said speaking of young people who are going to change the world for the better, let's get the Novi Robotics Team up here. He said we are very proud of them of what they have done and what you are doing, and we look forward to many more presentations from you guys.

A student representative for team 10477 Rapid Robots, Novi Michigan said they gave a presentation to you a few months ago, right before our world competitions. He said they were grateful for the encouragement and feedback that they got from all of you. He said they wanted to invite Mayor Gatt and City Council to their Oakland County Competitive Robotics Association (OCCRA) meeting on November 3 from 4:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. at the Novi High School with the Mayor being the chief guest to kick off the event. He said they would love it if all the Councilmembers could make it also, there are over 400 people coming from different parts of the county and over 18 teams.

The next student representative for the team 10477 Rapid Robots explained that the event will be witnessed by 400 people among the 18 teams we are hosting only three teams will be rewarded after the competition and they rely on a Novi wide policy for security measures, and believed the local news show will showcase what the competition is doing.

The next student representative for team 10477 Rapid Robots shared some details about their team hosting an event on November 3 from 4:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. in the Novi High School, it is about the Oakland County Competitive Robotics Association (OCCRA). It is a session of Oakland School Education Foundation. OCCRA supports academics such as design and engineering, physical and electronics. OCCRA is like the FIRST Robotics competition, but within Oakland County and put students mor in the center of competitions with OCCRA events robotics teams from Oakland County to compete. My teammates would like to invite you, Mr. Mayor, to the November 3, 2023, at Novi High School from 4 P.M. to 7:00 P.M.

### **MANAGER/STAFF REPORT:**

City Manager Cardenas shared a piece of good news from MDOT. He said they let us know that the eastbound on-ramp for I-96 is now open which is truly amazing. He said the off-ramp will take a little more time, but we are making progress. Mayor Gatt wondered if we had an ETA on the off-ramp. Mr. Cardenas said we are hoping later this month before the snowfall.

### **ATTORNEY REPORT: None**

### **AUDIENCE COMMENTS:**

Kathy Crawford, 46275 W. 11 Mile Road, Novi and has been a resident of Novi for over 80 years. She announced this evening you are going to hear a presentation about Older Adult Services. She informed Council they received a lot of extra information in their packets that she hoped that they would peruse carefully too because there is a lot of extra information. She stated she has been an advocate for older adults all her life while she was taking care of or living with her grandparents who lived here, and so did her husbands. She stated she was the founder of the Novi Senior Center in 1980. That was a long time ago, and professional in the field of aging for over 35 years are known by Parks and Recreation Senior Center was well known across the state of Michigan and won awards for being one of the most comprehensive senior citizen programs in the entire state and beyond. She asked why do you think all these senior congregate living places moved to Novi? Because, you know, Rose, Fox Run and Anthology and all the other places because we were well known as the best place for older adults to thrive. She said we had the desired amenities, we had strong support for police and fire, beautiful parks, cultural arts, volunteer options, transportation, state of the art library, city sponsored senior housing and strong senior programming. She said for over 45 years, the city of Novi had an active dynamic Senior Citizens Center under the umbrella of Parks and Recreation in Novi, since the beginning our senior center, Novi's 50 plus population has more than quadrupled. It has grown dramatically, but now we no longer have a Senior Center that can accommodate that has enough space that accommodates our population has grown dramatically, and our program has diminished. Why is that? She said that is something she is hoping that the presentation will help you understand. She mentioned the Library recently conducted a strategic plan. We have identified several needs for seniors in that strategic plan, Parks and Recreation has conducted surveys, SEMCOG has projections about Novi as growing populations, the recent focus groups that we had the visits to Senior Centers, that the former city manager, Director Muck and herself. She wondered at what point do we have enough information at what point she is more than confident that we have enough information and she urged you to direct staff to expand Older Adults Services to reconstruct the Senior Transit Program by contracting with a third party provider, and that will free up our fleet to do some additional programming, as well as give easier access to the residents of Novi who want to just go maybe to church or something else. She said she was going to wrap it up now. She would also like for you to direct staff to plan for additional space and accommodation for programs for the 50 plus residents along with space it serves as a focal point a senior center, if you will, which is critical to a thriving senior population. It is way past for this action. Thank you.

Venkata Reddy Thalla, 45006 Yorkshire Drive, Novi said he has been a resident of Novi for more than 25 years and he has been here for the last two or three years several times. He mentioned the need for upgrading our ballots. He stated there is a ballot for the mayor line and there is another ballot line for the Councilmembers. He believed those need to be one line. He said we just saw a band of baseball champions and we saw a band of Robotic Team members. He pointed out the Mayor wanted our city to become the best city in the state, in the country, and in the whole world. He said we need to elect four leaders from one line of the ballot and the top four leaders. He said the first one still will be mayor. He said we knew too much that for the lack of this update the wall has been

suffering for more than several centuries, so Novi new opportunity, valuable increment upgrades our ballot.

**CONSENT AGENDA REMOVALS AND APPROVALS:**

**CM 23-10-128            Moved by Smith, seconded by Casey; CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

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

- A.    Approve Minutes of:  
      September 25, 2023 - Regular Meeting
- B.    Approval of recommendations from the Youth Council Review Committee for appointments to Youth Council and Youth Boards & Commissions Student Representatives.
- C.    Approval of the 2023-2024 Winter Maintenance Agreement between the City of Novi and the Road Commission for Oakland County for snow and ice control on selected county roads in Novi; and adoption of resolution authorizing Novi to provide winter maintenance of selected county roads.
- D.    Approval to award a contract to Accurate Parking Lot Services Inc., the sole bidder, for municipal parking lot maintenance services, in an estimated annual amount of \$60,000. The contract term is for one year with three one-year renewal options.
- E.    Approval of License Agreement with Charge EV, LLC. To install an EV charging pedestal at the Nov Library. Final form and agreement to be decided by the City Attorney and City Manager
- F.    Approval of a License Agreement with the Board of County Election Commissioners for Oakland County for the use of the Novi Civic Center for the purpose of operating an early voting site, subject to final review of the form of agreement by the City Manager's office and City Attorney.
- G.    Enter Executive Session immediately following the regular meeting of October 9, 2023, in the Council Annex to discuss property acquisition.
- H.    Approval of claims and warrants – Warrant 1141

**Roll call vote on CM 23-10-128**

**Yeas: Casey, Crawford, Fischer, Smith, Thomas,  
Gatt, Staudt  
Nays: None**

**MATTERS FOR COUNCIL ACTION:**

**1. Consideration to Adopt the Michigan Employees' Retirement System ("MERS") Uniform Transfer Resolution for Employees to allow employees who transfer or are rehired to positions within the City to remain in current/previous retirement plan.**

Mr. Cardenas stated this item considers the MERS Transfer Policy which allows nine of our active employees to be transferred back into the MERS Defined Benefit Plan or DB Pension Plans, which they were transferred out of upon taking the promotion within the City. He explained this action would change a prior action by the City Council back in 2006. If approved, the nine employees' current Defined Contribution Plan will be frozen, and they will be transferred back into a DB Plan upon MERS signing off. The cost of these members will return to the DB Plan is an increase in the pension contribution of approximately \$250,000. He stated that is as charged annually. Finally, the proposed transfer back to the DB Plan for the nine members would be as of the current date. He said we are recommending October 23, 2023, because that is the next payroll, but not retroactively to the date they were originally promoted. We have Finance Director/CFO, Carl Johnson, on hand, if the Council has any specific financial questions.

Mayor Gatt reiterated what he thought Mr. Cardenas said, if this passes this evening, the nine employees, it will not be retroactive to the day that they gave up their Defined Benefit. It will become effective October 23 and not be retroactive. He said the monies that they have contributed to their Defined Contribution Plan will remain, is that correct? Mr. Cardenas said it will be frozen.

Mayor Gatt gave a little history of the people we are talking about, these nine employees. When they hired in with the City of Novi, they were offered a benefit package, health benefits, retirement plan with prescriptions, whatever else the City offered. When they took their jobs in whatever capacity they hired in on they assumed that those benefits would stay with them for their career. He noted somewhere along the line, the City Council, he was here, the City Council decided that the Defined Benefit Pension Plan we couldn't continue with it was going to be too expensive in the future. He said Novi and many other municipalities around the state, around the country, including private entities, they decided to do away with a Defined Benefit Plan, it was just too much money for the company or in this case, the City to handle. He said the City Council decided that they would switch to a Defined Compensation Plan, like many of us have such as a 401K or 457K. He said now, these nine employees, they had their Defined Benefit Plan because they were hired before the City switched over. He stated the City Council said if anybody who hires in after such a date, you are not going to be offered a Defined Benefit Plan, you are going to be offered a Defined Contribution Plan. Never again did the City Council get to weigh in on any changes. He stated somewhere along the line, someone and he guessed it was the City Manager at the time decided that when people who are in positions in the City move on, and they vacate that position, then anybody moving into that position would no longer be eligible for the Defined Benefit Plan. Again, that decision was not discussed at City Council, wasn't sanctioned by the City Council, it was done without Council approval, most of the time, not even with our knowledge. He said these nine employees who are working with this, then there was a time for them to move up in whatever organization they were, whether it be Police or Fire, or the DPW,

or whatever other department in the City, they were forced to make a decision do I get promoted or do I keep my Defined Benefit? That is a big, tough decision to make. It is financially difficult to say the least. He said there are employees who made that decision to give up the Defined Benefit and move up in the organization that are no longer here. He said as he read this, Mr. Cardenas, this is not going to affect any former employee, this is for the nine employees who are with the City today. Mr. Cardenas said that was correct. Mayor Gatt said some who made that decision and gave up their Defined Benefit and moved on, they did not stay. They took their promotion, but they left for whatever reason they had. He said he hears things and one of the things he heard was they left because they did not have a Defined Benefit anymore. He said if this motion is made to accept this plan tonight, he would be 100% in favor because what Novi is known for and what he has known Novi for the 20 years he has sat at this table for 12 of them at this position and that we do what is right, we do what is best for our employees, and what is best for the citizens. He thought what was best for our employees, and what is best for the citizens, was to make a wrong, right. He stated he thought he knew who the city manager was, he believed the decision was made in good faith. That person thought that by moving people out of Defined Benefit into Defined Contribution they would be saving the City a lot of money. He said we could see tonight, it is a substantial sum, but they did so at the expense of nine people who hired in with the promise, the expectation that they were going to have this benefit, and the people that moved on, for whatever reason that made the vacancy occur, they had the benefit, but people coming in didn't. He thought that was wrong. He hoped that his colleagues would see it that way too. He said it is a problem that should not have occurred as expensive as it is, it is an expense that the City should have concurred for all these years that they didn't, so actually we did save some money. He thought it was time to make it right. He commented he would be in favor of moving forward. He opened it up to the Council for further discussion or motion.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt asked if we are out looking for a group of police or firemen, and they have pensions currently, is there some transfer language? He wondered what that meant. City Manager Cardenas said that was a good question. He said for now it is for anyone that is currently hired in there. We accept other transfers. Anyone in MERS has a reciprocal agreement, so once you hire and you absorb that, that time someone else has, but every plan is different. He said it is only for current employees so that the transfer is only recognizing their time that their specific plan they have. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt asked if that employee would continue in that pension at that point? He said he was asking for a recruiting standpoint. He said for example, moving forward, if somebody comes from outside the City, that person has 25 years in and might be a deputy chief, would they continue with their pension once they came to Novi, or what happens in that situation? Mr. Cardenas explained that it depends on if they are only coming in with their time only. He said if they have a Defined Benefit Pension from MERS from a different program, and they come here with whatever years that may be, that may help vesting for us or for their current or previous employer to keep on adding that vesting and to gain that vesting period, but we are not going to take on that liability or that pension program from another community. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said he hoped down the road that the Council investigated that, because that really limits our opportunities to recruit from some

exceptionally good police and fire departments that why would somebody come here to give up their pension. He said the people who we are considering at this point are the top of our employee group, they are the leaders in the community. He said he was 100% in support of this. He said he wasn't there at the time the policy was adopted. He said he has been here 16 years, and he did not understand this until it was brought to his attention. He said he would support this also.

**CM 23-10-129      Moved by Staudt, seconded by Crawford: CARRIE UNANIMOUSLY**

**Adopt the Michigan Employees' Retirement System ("MERS") Uniform Transfer Resolution for Employees to allow employees who transfer or are rehired to positions within the City to remain in current/previous retirement plan.**

Member Fischer asked Mr. Cardenas if we approve this tonight, do you consider that some direction from Council that if there are future promotions, that those people should not also be required to give up their Defined Benefit, they should be able to maintain what they have if appointed to an administrative appointment. Mr. Cardenas said that is what this resolution does as well. He said anyone going forward that is currently in the Defined Benefit Plan, whatever department they are in, will then continue that benefit no matter what promotion they receive. Member Fisher said that answered his question. He agreed with everything the Mayor previously said. He just wanted to ensure that we did not have to revisit this in the future and that the City Administration had all the direction they needed from us.

Member Smith asked if our employees that are in this group required to take the pension back or can they make the decision not to. Mr. Cardenas said yes, they will be offered the option to either stay with and remain within their Defined Contribution Plan or go back to the Defined Benefit Plan. Member Smith thanked him for his explanation and said he was fully in support of this. He hated to see someone lose out while trying to work hard and do a good job and get promoted.

Member Casey said Member Fischer asked the question she was going to ask, so she wanted to put her comments on the record. She was glad that this issue was raised to Council because most of us have not been on Council or were not on Council in 2006 when the change happened and then the way that the way the MERS Policy reads that it was a mandated move that when they will because we did not specifically identified in 2006, it became a mandated move from the Defined Benefit Plan to Defined Contribution Plan. She was pleased that they were able to resolve it for the nine people that we are talking about. She was equally pleased that we are removing that barrier, if you will, for people who are considering for our own employees who are considering applying for a leadership position and understanding that they would have lost their Defined Benefit at that point. She fully supported this going forward.



**Roll call vote on CM 23-10-129**

**Yeas: Crawford, Fischer, Smith, Thomas, Gatt,  
Staudt, Casey**

**Nays: None**

- 2. Amend the budget to incorporate the costs associated with the resolution allowing current employees who were previously transferred or promoted to administrative positions within the City, to be transferred back to his/her previous retirement plan.**

City Manager Cardenas explained that this if the financial component of that just amending the budget to reflect what you have just decided.

**CM 23-10-130      Moved by Staudt, seconded by Fischer; CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**Amend the budget to incorporate the costs associated with the resolution allowing current employees who were previously transferred or promoted to administrative positions within the City, to be transferred back to his/her previous retirement plan.**

**Roll call vote on CM 23-10-130**

**Yeas: Fischer, Smith, Thomas, Gatt, Staudt,  
Casey, Crawford**

**Nays: None**

**CONSENT AGENDA REMOVALS FOR COUNCIL ACTION: None**

**AUDIENCE COMMENT:**

Venkata Reddy Thalla, 45006 Yorkshire Drive, Novi said he had a continuation of the previous comments. He thought we had an excellent discussion about pensions and promotions. He said it is similarly, for leaders, those four components question, so what, how, when, and why are becoming one. He said similarly, for a leader must come from one mother ballot. He wanted to bring that and reinforce what he said earlier. He thought leaders should come from one ballot for us. He gave an example, seven for one time, and the next time three. He thought this was a new opportunity value increment in the solution journey, which can lead and show the way to the entire world.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

1. Public Safety Building Needs Committee

Mayor Gatt said several months ago, we created two committees to investigate what we consider to be two very important issues facing the community. He stated the first one was the Public Safety Building Needs Committee, not the staffing needs. He said that we have some issues there, as does every community in the country. He said our building needs and in the public safety needed be addressed. He spoke with a little bit more experience than any of his colleagues up here because for 27 years he was a Novi police officer. He started his career in an old, dilapidated building on Novi Road to 25850 Novi

Road where our jail was a bar bolted to the wall in the squad room and you know, we had handcuffed prisoners to it. He said they shared the same bathroom as the prisoner did. He said it was an old, dilapidated building. He noted around 1980 somewhere in that era, we moved into what they considered to be the Taj Mahal, which is the building right next door to this facility at 45125 W. 10 Mile Road. He said every police officer in the force had four or five different lockers. It was unbelievable, we went from this to this overnight, but that was about 45 years ago. He said that the big, beautiful Taj Mahal is no longer that, it is now becoming that overcrowded building with many needs that no longer can service the community, much less the police department. He said over the last 45 years, the Police Department grew to unprecedented levels not only with the police officers that wear Novi police badges, but they house, officers from several different areas, law enforcement jurisdictions, which serves the public to serves the citizens of Novi to great ends, in way that he was not at liberty to talk about, the ways he did not even know about, but that police department doesn't just house Novi police, it houses several federal agencies in the state police and it no longer serves the purpose that is needed for our community. He said a committee was formed to study the needs.

Mayor Gatt said the first thing that happened after the committee was created was to have members tour the Police Department and three Fire Stations, Fire Station No. 1, Fire Station No. 2, and Fire Station No. 3, they determined that Fire Station No. 4, which is the newest station amongst the four stations, was still adequately serving the public. He noted after that, the Committee met and talked, the fact that the new buildings were needed, he put needed in capital letters, not just wanted was confirmed by everybody. He said we know this Committee knows that the public safety buildings no longer service the community in a functional manner. He said Fire Stations No. 1, 2 and 3 and the Police Department, we the Committee went to the City Council and had the money set aside to hire a consulting firm, a firm familiar with Novi, a local company name, Redstone Architects who specialized in public safety design and architecture, Mr. Daniel Redstone was going to come that evening, but he told him it was not necessary. He said you will know why in a minute. He stated in the interim period, the City Council met and identified a piece of property in the City that was for sale that would be a perfect spot for a Public Safety Building along with Fire Station No. 1, the City Council met and authorized the purchase of that property. He stated the contractor met with the Committee just last week, he had plans I place that he showed us. The plans were all inclusive, and they were very well done, they were very professional. He said the Committee, however, sent the contractor back to the field to modify the buildings that were presented. He actual had the Police Department and the Fire Department in separate building, unlike the Committee's wishes, we wanted one beautiful building with a little museum in the middle of a Public Safety and Fire Station No. 1 attached to the Fire Station Headquarters. He said that is what the Committee wanted, and he came back with a different concept. He stated they told them no; we would like them to go back and redo it a little bit and we wanted time to do further study on the adequacy of the fire stations in our community at this time. He said are four fire stations, is that enough? The City is built out, the City is building, the City is still growing, is that enough Fire Stations for our communities need. He said we do not know; he is the expert. He said they sent them back out into the field and he promised us that he is going to come back as soon as possible. He stated at that time

we will have more information for the Committee to study and further debate. He explained after that, the Committee will come back to City Council to request if the if the Committee decides, they will come back to City Council and they will request language. They will request the City Manager and the City Attorney to compile composed language that will eventually appear on a 2024 ballot for funding.

Mayor Gatt said the Committee was made up of himself, Mayor Pro Tem David Staudt, Member Justin Fischer, and from the public we wanted people from the public, they were honored to have David Malloy, retired Director of Public Safety Police Chief, Scott Olson, who was a reserved Police Officer for the City of Livonia, longtime Novi resident, Ted Zuchlewski, who for a living built 7-11 stores all over the country and knows very much about the building trade and of course, his friend and former mayor, the guy who really in his opinion can do no wrong, David Landry. He said it was those four civilians, and the three Councilmember were on the Committee. He said also attending all the meeting, of course were the Police Chief Director of Public Safety Erick Zinser, the Assistant Polic Chief Scott Baetens, Fire Chief John Martin, and our City Manager Victor Cardenas. So as the Mayor, he wanted to say thank you to those folks. He said he did not know what the future holds as far as his involvement with the Committee. He will no longer be the mayor the next time that Committee meets, and the mayor appoints that committee, so he is hoping to be reappointed in a different capacity than he is now, but that is up to the next mayor. He said one thing is for certain, no matter who's on that Committee, no matter what happens next, the people in this community deserve the very best we talked about this evening, we ha the very best baseball team, we have the very best youngsters representing Novi Meadows in sixth grade with their Robotics Team. Well, when we need help quick 911, we as a Council was very astute in picking an ambulance company that is going to be on guard 24 hours a day, seven days a week to answer our needs. He said they are not going to come if somebody breaks into your house, they are not going to come if somebody steals your bicycle. We need to house our public safety people, the people who risked their lives day and night. He said he always say when you become a police officer or firefighter, when you raise your hand and take that oath, you are really writing a check to the city of Novi, and all the residents, you are saying, I promise you everything I have up to and including my life if you employee me here.

He said we are so fortunate to live in Novi, where today, nobody's been asked to do that, but that can change in a minute. These men and women who protect us deserve the very best and right now they do not have it, and they deserve it. H said he was looking forward to the next Committee meeting when Mr. Redstone comes back with some new plans that we have sent them out to draw up, along with a study telling us maybe we need a couple more Fire Stations, maybe we need to close one, change one, move one, he was not sure what he is going to say. Theat is why we have him. He said ladies and gentlemen, Councilmembers and the public that was his report from our Public Safety Building Needs Committee. He stated it was not as complete as he wished it was. He said we thought Mr. Redstone at our last meeting was going to give us something that we could come back here and say this is what we are looking for. As he said earlier, we set them out to do a little bit more work, he did not think he is going to be gone for much

longer, but it will be after the next election. He looked forward to hearing this report. He asked if anybody had any questions or comments.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt thought the Mayor covered it great. He said he knew this has been an important thing for you for the past number of years. One thing that is clear is that the current footprint of our Police Station does not fit what we need in the long term. One of the most important things that came up in our last meeting was the ability to have an area where all the police cars and all the public safety vehicles can be under a roof, it is incredibly important that you now our snowplows, we keep them in a very beautiful heated room, we need to do that with our police, He thought it is awful tough to be able to go outside, it is nasty out, you have a snowstorm, you have got to drive back, you get out, we should be able to go into an enclosed area. He said one of the very most important things, it is going to require a lot of space, this footprint just is not the right spot for that. He felt this was one of the important things. He said the other thing is, it is clear to us, and he thought it would be anybody who looked deeply into this, that the four Fire Stations we had when we had 50,000 people are not going to accommodate the future 80,000 or whatever that number is on a build out. He said one of the areas clearly is the far southwest quadrant, which means Napier and 8 Mile Road. He said we are just to spread out of a city to be able to cover everything that we need. He said those are just a few things. He said it was a very comprehensive report and was looking forward to seeing what is brought back. He appreciated the Mayor bringing this forward. He felt it is something that he knew we have talked about, especially for example, Fire Station No. 1, moving that for the past eight to 10 years. He mentioned now with the economic development that is happening at Sakura, and on Main Street, that isn't the appropriate place for a Fire Station. He said he looked forward to the future on this, it is not going to be cheap, it is not going to be simple. He said not everybody is going to agree on everything. He felt we needed to move forward. Thank you, Mayor.

Member Fischer thanked the Mayor. He said as a member of the Committee, he wanted to make a couple of comments to first on the police. He said the Mayor touched on this a little bit. He said obviously, our men and women who protect us deserve the very best and the footprint is inadequate. He said we have toured the facility. Everything from the locker rooms, changing stations, to areas to write reports, or even for victims coming in to talk, it is just not adequate. He stated it is not how the residents should be treated, or our men and women on the force. He commented on the piece that he really wanted to touch on as well as the importance of making sure there is space for our partners as well, we do, we have had a long history of working with state level, federal agencies as well. He said we want to cultivate those relationships, because every time one of those men and women are also here helping us solve crimes. He said we pay for the desk space, but it is like we are getting some of that work for free, and they bring as the Chief's let him know that they bring resources that we would not have without those relationships. He stated as far as the police side of things, that is one piece that he really wanted to make sure that Redstone homes in on it. He said as fire as the fire side of the issue he agreed with Mayor Pro Tem Staudt comment on the southwest quadrant, but the one that he really wanted to push the architect on and which he was disappointed in the report ant that they better come back with some more information on is the north end

Fire Station No. 2. He struggled to understand how with some of the development not only whether it be Fox Run and Lenox, but also the commercial development up in that M-5 Haggerty Corridor and what other developments that might go in on the west side of the City, how that Fire Station, which is probably one of the two smallest in the City is adequate. He said that is an area of study whether we need to add a station up there, where we could even move that one because the footprint of the lot is not enough to expand that Fire Station. He thought that is where the report was lacking and he looked forward to Redstone coming back with some comprehensive analysis of that section and that data to make sure that we make some good decisions, not just now, but obviously 15, 20 or 30 years down the road. He stated those were his two observations, one of the police and on the fire of what he expected in the future, but a very good report from you as well, Mr. Mayor of bringing us up to date on what we have come to accomplish in the last six months.

Member Thomas said she listened intently and unfortunately did not have many notes. She said she is going on memory so please forgive me if I get any of this incorrectly. She said originally this came to City Council with a very detailed plan of exactly what was wanted. She said it looked like the Committee met three times, she saw no new documentation on the Committee page to see what work other than some meeting notes, it looks like. She said one of them doesn't have notes, the October 4 meeting does not have notes, but she could see a total of three hours aside from that she had no idea how long the meeting was in October the team met. She commented that it took a total of three hours to come to this conclusion. She felt like we haven't done enough work studying the appropriate placement. She said it was mentioned that we have the perfect place, she did not know that we did any work to determine that is the perfect place and from her perspective, it does not seem like it is a good place to put at least a fire station, it is difficult to get out of that place. She felt like there was still some work. She said she would like to, she was hoping that in future assessments that will have some studies of what the actual needs are of the community, rather than feelings that what people would like to have in a place. She wanted some sort of data that says this is what we need. She said we have done some forecasting for what we expect the future to be or something that says, this is the forecast. This is the future; this is what we expect we need in places, and she said she could be missing it. She said she was seeing that here, but she understood that it was not a final report. She hoped that as we get to a conclusion from the Committee we see more of that type of detailed data, of how we know we are building the right thing and how we know we are building and proposing it in the right place. Thank you.

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## 2. Older Adult Needs Committee

Member Casey commented that we had a nice preview of our presentation during Audience Comment, but she wanted to take a moment and go through their presentation we sent over 30 slides to Council in your packet. She said she was not going to read every slide; we are going to hit some of the high points from their presentation. She said the reason that we are talking about older adults is because we know that by 2040 that one in five Americans is going to be over the age of 65. She said we also know

that with an increasing older adult population, it is going to bring some changing needs for us for public safety, transportation, medical treatment, social services, and community building. She said this is the right time for us to be talking about what we need to be looking for and what we need to be planning for when it comes to talking about our older adults. She was proud to be standing in front of you as the Chair. She stated Council remembers that back in January, they passed a resolution creating the Older Adult Needs Committee and we appointed the following members: Kathy Crawford who come from the Library Board and the Historical Commission, but we picked Jay Dooley who is our Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commissioner and Chair, Kim Nice from the Historical Commission, her colleagues, Brian Smith and Erica Thomas from City Council and Debbie Wrobel from the Historical Commission. She apologized to all of you that she has her back to you this evening. She mentioned our staff liaisons were Jeff Muck, Kit Kieser and our Deputy City Clerk Melissa Morris was a wonderful support to us, she really kept us on track. She said Executive Assistant to the City Manager, Katherine Oppermann filled in a couple of times when Melissa was not available. She thanked the Committee for their time, their dedication to their interest in the subject for their engagement and for their active participation. She thought they made a lot of great progress as a committee over the last few months.

Member Casey said she was not going to read this slide, but she did want to show everybody that the Committee was charged with a very large set of responsibilities. She noted they were not asked to look at one or two things, they were given a large charge. We are continuing to do our research and start making our recommendations based on this list of responsibilities that you see on the slide. She said they have spent several months on a learning journey, most of us do not have the background in this space. She said we all needed to understand what goes on, what are the right needs for older adults. How does the City work to solve the needs of our older adults today. She said they heard from a wide range of people, both within the City and outside of the City, to really help us understand and get ourselves grounded in the information that we would need to make some good decisions and some good recommendations. She said now we are starting to draft our insights and our recommendations. She said this is an early review and that is how this deck was listed and named in our packet. She reiterated that this is an early report, we are going to continue to work and build our insights and recommendations. She thought they would come back in front of Council sometime in early 2024, with the final recommendation.

She said speaking of actions, one of the big things that we just completed was doing some community focus groups. The reason we do focus groups is because when you have a chance to talk with people and talk with our residents, and you put them in a focus group situation, you get direction from those residents, you get to understand some of the insights, you start to understand the why and the what. She stated that in many instances, you do a focus group before you start doing a survey, because a survey is going to give you the how many, but you get smarter about what you want to ask in a survey when you do focus groups. She said we were fortunate to have an expert who was able to work with us to develop the content and flow for how these focus groups would run, he facilitated the focus groups. She said he was going to come up in a minute

and share some of the insights with you. She introduced Scott Adler, he has a long history of work, 35 years of experience working in healthcare operations, marketing, and business development, but even more critically he founded a consulting firm called Insights Strategies, LLC, which has been around for 19 years. She said he has done this kind of work multiple times, and with other municipalities with people in higher education, and with clients in health care. She said we were fortunate to have his skills and expertise, support us in doing our focus groups and get this first set of learnings.

Mr. Adler thanked everyone for the opportunity to be here with you this evening. He wanted to spend a few minutes on the key findings. He said any questions that you may have, we can certainly spend as much time as you would like, just beginning with the deliverables for the engagement. He said the idea was how do we create an improved understanding of what residents who are 50 plus say they need in terms of services and activities and what did these resident seniors expect from both the city of Novi, and other in the private sector to support the delivery of those needs. He stated that the idea of creating an initial definition of a Senior Center, we heard about the Senior Center that you had years ago. He said an improved understanding of whether a Senior Center as defined by these participants, was something that the seniors would in fact, utilize few words about who participated there were 41 residents who participated, they were broken up into age cohorts, there were seven participants in the 50-59 age group, 10 in the 60-69 age group, and 12 in the 70-79 age group and 12 in the 80 plus age group who participated and they have been pretty long term residents here in Novi. Almost half have lived in Novi for 20 years, or more. He said 88% of them had used Novi services. He said it was a group that was probably more active in that regard than what you would find in the general population. He stated 61% have used more than six of the services that have been offered. He said two-thirds of them use a variety of services, they are not just showing up and playing pickleball and then going home, they are using a whole bunch of the different services that are offered relative to the methodology. He said there was a common discussion guide, there were four 90-minute age specific focus groups, and those were open discussion driven by a by that discussion guide. He said then there was one two-hour large group session with all the participants, and it was with all the ages coming together. He said the conversation was guided by questions that were drawn from each of those specific focus groups that we had previously. He stated they used an interactive audience response system. So, when they were talking about things, they were able to vote, and the responses were able to come up on the screen to continue to facilitate that discussion. He said in terms of the key findings, the first is participants are generally pleased with the Novi Older Adult Services offerings. He said there is a general sense that Novi is playing catch up with the surrounding communities. He stated about half of the folks who participated felt that Novi even despite the broad array of services that are being offered that when compared to surrounding communities, specifically, when they looked at Farmington, were they talked about Livonia, that there was some of the services were wanting. He noted there was a strong sense that a single location, Community Center is needed and when they talked about this idea of a Community Center they were talking about not a Senior Center per se, but wanted time to be carved out for seniors, but they wanted to be able to bring their grandkids or their older adult children to this location as well, but the idea of having a single location was important to

them. He said you heard folks, especially in the 70s and 80s were saying it just a lot easier if I know where I am going if there is just a single place that I can go. He stated one of the findings that was interesting is about three of the four participants said it was either very or somewhat important that the space that is used for this single location would be renovated space as opposed to building from scratch. A central location that creates what they talked about, and strongly desired was a central location that creates and provides an opportunity for a sense of community, folks who are aware in these groups they were delightful to talk with and are strong advocates for Novi. He said they talked about this idea of wanting to belong and a place that is a center to come to. There is not a city center, not a downtown. They thought that this could be that for a place where they could come and congregate and be together with one another. This was the in terms of specific services he said a pool was very important to the group, but 80% of them said that a pool for exercise and for them to be able to be with their peers was a very important consideration. He mentioned a couple things that were important about the pool because they can use this the school pool for folks who want to exercise and do therapeutic water, Aqua work, but it is too cold. The water needs to be warm, there is a particular temperature that they are looking for. So, a warm pool for exercise they thought was missing from the services that are being offered. He said one of the parts of the conversation is they talked about this new place, and they talked about a pool, we talked about where this coming from, it is not free. He stated of the group that participated, 53% of them thought it was not unreasonable to have a small millage to support this. They also talked about being willing to pay more for both services that they are currently receiving, or to be able to subscribe and come in monthly, for example, to a particular location. He said they talked about this in terms of seniors, they no have children in schools, but they still pay taxes to support the schools. They saw this in the reverse. He said they talked about this as an investment in the future of those seniors and the growth of the senior population in Novi. They thought it was reasonable to think that others would support that as a City Center to grow to support seniors.

Mr. Adler had a few final thoughts. He said what we heard around communication is essential, participants talked about how they struggled to stay in the know about what services were offered. They all loved the Engage magazine, but if they received it a day after others received it, it was hard getting into a lot of the popular programs, they would run into those being full. He said they are looking for a sing way to communicate. He stated they loved what the Library is doing in terms of their monthly email that goes out to folks that say here is what is happening. Here is a list of activities for the coming month. He stated they referenced that several times, participants said that they appreciated being invited to participate in the focus groups.

He said nine out of 10 of them strongly or somewhat agreed that Novi really wanted to hear, but they put a lot of faith in the City Council to say we asked you to the table, we appreciate being invited, and we recognize that you did not have to do this, but it really seems like you care. He highlighted a couple of quotes, that it is nice that folks are listening to us, and they were very complimentary regarding the City Council in that regard. He said the development of a single location, again, should occur through renovating current space instead of new construction, that he referenced earlier. They



talked a lot about this building in terms of a single, centralized location, how might this building be used more broadly for the kinds of things that they were talking about. He said this ends the formal part of the presentation. He said he would be happy to answer any questions. He mentioned they still had a handful of slides to highlight.

Member Casey asked Council to hold the questions until we get to the end. She stated she was continuing some of the activities that we have done, and you just heard Scott talk about the interest in communications and the need just for the seniors to stay in touch. She mentioned they had conversations with Director Walsh-Malloy, and Older Adult Services Manager, Kit Kieser, they have started their own conversations about how to pull out and start executing an electron e-newsletter. Similar to what we heard, feedback from the Library, how do we, from the City perspective, take a moment and educate our residents us an e-newsletter, we also talked about some ways to redesign the area of Engage, he enhanced area of Engage to make it more readable for older adults. The other quick wind that they see something is there is currently a part-time OAS program staff position, she stated their recommendation is that becomes a full-time position instead of part-time, this will really help continue and expand the programs that we offer. She said staff can implement this as quickly as the hiring process allows, there is nothing that would prevent quick movement on that. She changed gears a little bit and said she was going to talk about transportation.

Member Casey said transportation is a big topic across the City, we did a really deep dive into transportation, she had some of the stats on the overhead screen that she heightened. In terms of the number of part-time drivers we have, how many shuttles we operate, the fact that we provided almost 14,000 rides in FY 2023. You heard earlier that most of those rides are in the middle of the day. She thought the key thing for the Council to understand, and this came right out of the data is that two-thirds of all the rides are for medical appointments or work. The straight majority 44% of all rides are for medical appointments and she did not know if that was an understood fact. She thought that has changed over the years in terms of the use of our transportation system. She said we know we provide a great service, but there are still gaps in availability and timing that we need to meet. She said a lot of that has to do with the medical appointments because we asked our riders to schedule at least one day in advance. She stated the frequency of the rides to medical appointments challenged that ability for us to meet the needs of our residents, because we enable, and we allow residents to schedule far in advance if they have a medical appointment. She said in many cases, their ongoing treatments allow our residents to schedule multiple weeks in advance. She said we have a big schedule, and we understand where we ae going at certain times of the day, but now we have people who might need to go someplace, and they have a day's notice. She said it becomes harder for us to try to get them onto a shuttle because we have very specific places that we are going to solve the needs to get people to medical appointments. She said there are some real challenges there, and it is an important service that we offer. She stated it causes some scheduling challenges for us to look at when it comes to meeting the needs of availability and timing. She said you heard this earlier in the audience comments, our Committee is recommending that Council does contract with a third party provider covered under the county millage to expand

transportation for residents. She said it is going to become costly for us to maintain and expand our own program to meet the scheduling and availability gaps that we know we have. She said to do that we are going to have to if we do this on our own, we are going to have to add drivers and vehicles. She stated the challenge comes in there is right now our drivers are part-time. She said we know that we have challenges today with hiring and retention, so for us to be competitive in recruitment and retention and match market rate for other types of jobs and other, you know occupations where people are driving full time, we need to take our drivers and move from a part-time model to a full-time model. She said that will also include a need to increase the hourly rate by \$4.00 to \$6.00 dollars an hour so there is a cost component. She stated we also know that we are going to need to add some additional shuttles. She said it is current lead time of 12 months plus to get vehicle built, and every ADA outfitted van is about \$80,000 each. So again, we are looking at increased costs because we are going to need to increase our fleet. So, with that being understood, we have got a millage that passed in the city of Novi, our residents are paying for that millage today. She said part of that millage they are paying to the county would include the operations of a third-party provider, so that is really driving our recommendation. She stated the thing to know about the third-party providers is they do charge, today, most of our rides are free, those third-party provider charges \$2.00 dollars per one way ride. She said if Council is concerned about the cost to our residents, there is an opportunity for them to explore subsidizing the rides for residents who are 65 or older, with our third-party provider. She mentioned we heard earlier, too, she believed that the third part-partner provider is going to allow us to keep a few of the current shuttles that we have in operation, we can use them for more senior programming. She said we can also start to look at potentially offering rides to some of our evening City events to make it easier for our residents to get into our events.

Member Casey said the key to know here too, this is a quick overview that we are giving you this evening, and she did it fast. She explained that part of that reason is because our Administration is currently talking with the county to understand what our options are. She said we as a Committee we wanted to make sure that you the Council, me the Council, all of the Council had our position and had our understanding of what their recommendation is, as it relates to transportation, our final report will have a lot more data behind it. She said this is a quick understanding for Council, that this committee really recommends using a third-party provider.

We saw our list of objectives at the beginning of the presentation, we still have things in front of us, not least of which is doing a survey, really wanting to quantify based on the insights we have from the focus group, understand what housing options that our residents need, understand, as they move, are they as they age? Are they seeking to move? What do they need to do to stay in our city? Are there programs or service needs that we aren't meeting right now? Are there volunteer needs that our residents have they want to volunteer? How can we help them find ways to volunteer? Also talking about a Senior Center or a Community Center if you will. What are the true needs, what are the wants, what is the potential use she thought is a key factor to understand and what means are our residents will to us to pay? She said we need to do some continued research on solving our additional space requirements today. She stated moving

forward, if we do go forward with a Senior Center, or some type of Community Center, that is several years in the future, we know we have got space requirements today. She said we need to do some further research as a committee to find ways to offer programs where the spaces are. She said we need to find a way to find more space for our programming. She stated one of the things that was addressed in our resolution was looking to solve the needs of our residents with disabilities. She said we are seeking to have a presentation for the Disability Network to come talk to us about universal design and understand how we can be smarter and better at enabling our residents to move about the City both from a mobility perspective, and visibility perspective. It is kind of wayfinding a little bit if you will, as well, we are going to need to have some conversations to understand what future our advocacy looks like because one of the charges for our Committee was how do we continue to advocate for our senior residents. She said we have some conversation ahead of us to really understand what this looks like. She mentioned if there are some recommendations for the length of the life of this Committee. Does it morph to something else? How do we really continue to advocate for the needs of our seniors.

Member Casey said the last thing on our long list of things yet to do is to finish our research and prepare a recommendation and a final report to Council again, coming probably early 2024. She said we moved fast through this because it is late in the evening, and Council has this information in its packet. She said she moved fast for the presentation, but she was going to take a step back and pull Scott Adler up because she suspected you were going to have a lot of questions for him and open it up to Council for questions.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt asked Mr. Adler if he could come down to the podium for questions. He wondered what drove 50 years old, he said he was 64 and he did not consider himself a senior, he thought there was a different set of standard than somebody who is 65 and as we move up into their 70s. Why did we start at 50? Mr. Adler said he was going to defer the question to Member Casey. Member Casey said so part of the reason we started at 50 is we know that different generations are aging and have different expectations as they age. We wanted to understand from a slightly younger cohort what their needs were looking like now, so we could incorporate that into our planning. Technically, when you look at how we consider how we identify an older adult, within the City, we say an older adult is 55 and older. She said 50 isn't that much younger, but it really helps us do future forward planning. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt thanked her for her explanation.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said he wanted to talk about transportation. He said he may be the only person up there who has used transportation about six to seven years ago, he had a serious foot surgery. He said he used Senior Transportation for about seven months, it was a great example. He said he learned so much and out of it came scheduling systems. He noted we did some different things because he had a firsthand view of it. He said he did not know what third-party means, he wondered if the third party meant SMART. Member Casey said the third-party would be something like WOTA, or People's Express. We have seen that come from a memo from the City Manager back at the tail end of August as well, in terms of who those third-party providers are that are covered

under the millage currently and what they offer. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said he was not willing to kick the ball down the road to somebody else. Honestly, I am not sure that we can ever expect a third party to do as good a job as our city does. He said he did not think anybody here that is on Council currently has ever been worried about cost. He reiterated what was previously discussed, our seniors have invested many years here and pay for school, pay for everything else, their return on their dollars as it pertains to Senior Services has never been what he would consider equitable. So, money at this point, he did not think as part of the discussion. He said we are not even there yet.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt mentioned one of the big things that he read a lot about and then, he was kind of close to is the whole concept of aging in place. He said he was not sure that enough of that is being considered and what he has seen here, and he has done a lot of reading on aging in place. He said he is a member of the Aging in Place Council, so he gets a lot of literature on it. He thought the biggest issue in the city of Novi is as we age in our homes become exceptionally valuable, that if we want to stay here, we have some very limited options. He said Meadowbrook Commons is just a very small fraction of the number of people in town who can move into that. He said when people are calling you and offering you \$400,000 to \$500,000 for a house that you bought 30 or 40 years ago for \$100,000, and you have nowhere to go. He asked what you are going to do for \$400,000 your intention is not to go and buy something for \$400,000 then you pay enormous taxes on it. He said we do have some great senior housing here, he thought the City, and we have an opportunity to think about this because it doesn't require debt in its normal, we can use revenue bonds, like we did for Meadowbrook Commons. He thought senior housing with the transition from being a homeowner to something that is affordable is incredibly important. He said when he sees affordable senior housing that is an oxymoron to him, it is difficult. He said we have some exceptionally good centers here that are not cheap. He said he thought that the City needs to look at its opportunities to expand what we have done, to what Kathy did with Meadowbrook Commons. He said there are an awful lot of things here that we need to investigate. He said the most important things to him are figuring out a way to transition from your current home into something that you can stay in.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said regarding senior transportation, he was not afraid of expanding that dramatically. He thought it is an important thing, third parties, but you must convince him that a third party is really going to do the job that we would provide our residents through our services in the other thing is the Recreation Center, or Senior Center with a pool. He agreed 100%, but you must figure out how we are going to fund that. He said when somebody says, just a small millage, there is no such thing as just a small millage. It is just a small millage when it is not your tax dollars. It is somebody else's. He said whether it is .25 mills gets us a million dollars, well, that does not pay for a building, that does not pay for a pool, that does not pay for additional service, it might pay for additional personnel. He said we are talking about having to be willing to make a significant investment, not just a small investment. He said those were his comments. He did not need anyone to provide feedback on most of it, because a lot of it is here. He thought what we are doing is a good idea, but he would like to see a far more expansive vision of what we are seeing here currently.

Member Fischer said he had a question from insight, Scott. He stated there were several references to we want it to be renovated we do not want new construction, he asked if he could unpack that a little bit further for him from the focus group. He wondered what the context of the conversation was. What was really meant by that, because it was dropped a couple times here, but he was very confused as to what that really meant. Mr. Adler stated there were several comments, and this goes across all the age categories. He said it was not as though the younger group said one thing, and the older group said another, again, these were individual groups, by those age cohorts, and they talked about one of the quotes that stuck in his mind was "We do not need to knock down another building and build something" and "Why can't we invest in the buildings that we already have". He said they talked about buildings like this one, they talked about over off Grand River, he forgot the name of where Vic's Market used to be in that area where he thought you were building a downtown over in that area is where they were talking about. He said some of them talked about it from environmental factors. They said they did not want to take away more green space. He thought it was just this idea that rather than always building something new, why don't we build on what we already have.

Member Fischer said that was kind of helpful as he looked through it, a lot of times when we talk about some of these things, whether it be development or anything else, in isolation, all of these tend to sound great. He said when you put them all together, it doesn't make a lot of sense. He said when they talk about the current Civic Center, you cannot do yoga without touching somebody, so how are we going to renovate the current footprint of our Civic Center if we already do not have enough space here, and we are not going to just make up space. He said, okay, maybe let's look at renovating something in the downtown area, but another big theme throughout here was they want a centralized area. He said it is like the whack a mole game, right. He said you might be able to hit two or three things you want, but something eventually is going to have to give. He said that is why he wanted a little more context on what was coming through from that perspective. Mr. Adler explained the purpose of a focus group is to get people to begin to think out loud and to have these conversations in a guided forum. He said some of the things that we were saying were paradoxical. There were people who would say, small millage, we could debate what small means, but that is the kind of thing they were talking about. He said yet, they talked about frustration that the cost of the services currently is more than they think they are worth in some cases, and they talked about new ways to do that. He said it is going to put Jeff in a pickle because logistically, it makes it hard, they would like to be able to say, when I want to come, I want to show up, but I do not want to buy a series of 10 visits for pickleball. For example, if I know I am going to miss a few of them, because the cost per visit goes on. He said it was those kinds of things, and he did not think that the folks harbored any illusions that they were going to say this, and the counselor was going to say, you know, done. The ideas were, as they started to talk these things through these different ideas began to bubble up of what was important to them.

Member Fischer said with that, which of those themes would you say, because again, there are a couple that conflict with each other, which ones would you say roast to the top as far as centralized area, renovating a place? He asked Mr. Adler to explain a little bit more about what he saw. Mr. Adler thought that if it was a single location, again, not here, but a single location, where they would be able to come and congregate, and have a sense of community, with their peers, that he thought was the single biggest thing that came out of this, that he saw that and the pool, from a programmatic perspective is about the pool. He said what it means to him, that single center represented more than a place to put a bunch of services, it was a place that I could go to, and be with people and have coffee with people, because I am concerned, whether I am aging in place or not, there are people who are stumbling, one of the folks who was in there said "I am worried that when I retire, I am going to lose my social connections through work, what am I going to do?" He said they want to go to this place that is, in their mind central again, we didn't take out a map and draw the coordinates, but the ideas were is there a single place where we can have a sense of community where I can go and be with my peers, fellow residents and talk, craft, drink coffee. Member Fischer thanked him very much for that. He said it was interesting information from the focus groups, he appreciated that as well.

Member Fischer said he wanted to touch a little bit on the transportation. He said he was a little shocked to jump right to a third party, a recommendation that we start going down the path of a third-party provider. He said the biggest thing and thanks, Mayor Pro Tem, he commented on this previously, it is all about the accountability. He stated right now, if something is going on with Senior Transportation, we hear about it as a Council. He said they are all on the phone with Victor and it is getting fixed ASAP, because the staff knows that it's going to be something that we have taken very seriously, from the Mayor on down to the Council table. He said he would be very hesitant, he thought it is going to take a lot more discussion at this table to get him remotely comfortable with any sort of outsourcing. Another reason he says this is that we are already talking about charging users, which this Council went through the discussion years ago, to provide free transportation. He felt the conversations with the county should continue, because we need to bring it back for a full Council discussion.

Member Fischer said the last thing he wanted to call on and again, as Mayor Pro Tem Staudt alluded to is the housing, he thought a lot more and he knew that is something on your committee's next step. He wanted to share some thoughts there because, you know, it is very interesting. He always says things like we were just talking about these conflicts. People like to sit there and talk about development in the city of Novi, they like to talk about how we shouldn't allow density and that everything should be one house per acre and do not go high and do not let more people in the city, but that doesn't drive affordability. How do you get to more affordable housing? He brought it up before for entry level people coming back from college and how do you do that for seniors to be able to downsize? He said sometimes you must look at density as an option to accommodate that and help that affordability and have those discussions, so he just wanted to give his two cents to the Committee as they move forward. He stated from a housing perspective hopefully they won't bow to the political pressure out there to ignore

density as an option. He said it is not only something that helps the affordability, but also gets to the socialization, the ability of people to get together, not just in a common area that we might provide, but also withing their own housing, and the friends that they might make in a new area. He said he just didn't want to see the Committee deterred by some of the rhetoric and the political pressure out there to try to make that seem like such a terrible auction. He said that was all the comments that he had, again, thank you to the Committee for their work, and this report. He looked forward to hearing more.

Member Crawford said he may have missed it in the presentation and in the documentation, but he wondered if there was any discussion of a standalone department. In other words, not part of a department as it exists now with its own director and separate department. Member Casey said they have not gotten to that level; the Committee was aware of Councils decision and the motion to put money in the budget. She said they talked about from a staffing perspective, now, is trying to increase the programming staff that is available and move that quickly, excuse me, taking that part time position and moving it to full time, we have not talked further about any kind of structure of the department at this point. Member Crawford said that is what he personally would like to see. He said he was not going to be here when all that comes to fruition, but he would like to see personally, a separate director, and a separate standalone department for Senior Services.

Member Thomas said she wanted to address the transportation issue. She pointed out that we do have a lot of issues just trying to staff or to get the staff and the vehicles to be able to do the transportation that we need, you must guarantee your rides, you must make those plans and significantly in advance to get a guaranteed ride. She believed that looking at the options, and looking at the third-party options that are available is imperative to knowing one that we are using our millage money appropriately, and to being able to free up resources right now, we are bogged down with taking people back and forth to doctor's appointments. She said the top three are doctor appointments, shopping, and work transportation. She stated it has been a long time, probably a decade or so, but her mother used SMART transportation to go back and forth to dialysis three times a week, they were completely reliable. She said they were there; she wouldn't be quick to dismiss it. She said she would want to make sure that we take very opportunity to explore all the options on the table, and not say, just dismiss the idea of using a third-party, we need to really make sure that we are being as effective as we can. She said that also gives us the opportunity to free up the vehicles we have for things like senior programming, one of the many things that we have heard they like the ability to do travels or to be able to take tours, historical tours. She thought if we had our vehicles freed up, we could do that type of programming rather than having them tied up going back and forth to doctor's appointments all day so we can still serve that community and be able to add some of the additional programming that our seniors need.

Member Thomas stated that we have a lot of work to do on housing. She pointed out right now that Meadowbrook is an affordable place to live. She said Novi residents get residents to live there in there is only about a 30% of Novi residents who did move into that community. She said it is available, not just for Novi, but Novi residents are not

choosing to move there at the time. There is still a lot of work to see what the options are and it is on our next steps moving forward. She wanted to point that out as well.

Member Smith thanked Mayor Gatt for appointing him to this committee. It has been a very interesting experience. He thanked Member Casey for her leadership, the rest of the team on the Committee and the staff for all the hard work that was done to get to this point. He said it was a learning experience or when you are trying to address the needs of people who are 55 to people like himself and Mayor Pro Tem Staudt, who are in their middle 60s to people like his parents who are in their later 90s, who are all nearby residents. He said there is an incredible amount of diversity of needs. He said Mr. Adler found out in his presentation and some of them are conflicting. He thought we do need to go ahead and do that survey to get more information. He mentioned that the members and the Committee are going to know what he is going to say next is we need to know why people move out of Novi. He said it may not just be affordability. He knew in his case, it could be grandchildren in Boston, for example, that might draw him out of Novi. He said we need to understand why people leave, why people come here, what they are expecting. He looked forward to continuing the work on this Committee into next year for the final report.

Mayor Gatt gave his final two cents on the issue. He thought after he retired as mayor, he was going to go become a community organizer and this is going to be one of his pet projects. He said the older adults in this community are growing in numbers which is pointed out here. He said we do not service them as we should. He said several times that Novi is the best, Novi is the best in so many ways, but we dropped the ball when it comes to seniors in a couple different areas. He said I know we have talked about it here, so he would not belabor the point too much.

Mayor Gatt thought senior housing when his folks were alive, they lived in Livonia, there were many opportunities for them to get housing either in high rises or flat beds, or whatever was needed was available in Livonia, they have several different senior communities, centers, housing centers, we do not have that here. He gave thanks to Kathy Crawford, many years ago, and we need more, we need more in different parts of the City. He said what Member Fischer said, he wished somebody recorded it, and we could play it during election time, because people want to use density as something bad. He said people say it is so bad to have so many people living in one area, but that is the only way we are going to make things affordable. He stated that is why builders want things dense, because they can put more people in a smaller footprint and make more money. He said if we are looking at seniors, we want them in a certain location, we want them with a smaller footprint. He said he did not know where in the City because there will be people protesting whatever is proposed, but somewhere in the City, maybe two or three different spots, we should have more senior housing available.

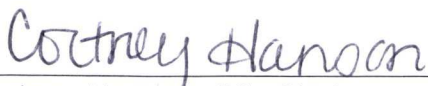
Mayor Gatt said when it comes to transportation, he could not disagree more with one of his colleagues, third parties are not the answer. He said this is Novi, we are the best and if it takes more money and Mayor Pro Tem said the best, money has never been a big issue with anybody up on this Council when it comes to anything. He said we have the



money here, thank goodness, we want to provide the best services to our community and our senior community. He said it has been said many times, he has heard a politician say, oh, they cannot come to the meetings at night. Well, then let's expand our service to drive at night. Let's expand it because we have the money to do it. He mentioned the late great Wayne Wrobel, Mayor Pro Tem Staudt, and himself sat down one day and said let's make the transportation low cost, and then we said let's make it free. He said we did and the senior citizens in this community have availed themselves of those service. He said guess what, Novi is still rolling along. He said we should expand it. He said the Parks and Recreation people who oversee this, if the people want more transportation, let's buy more buses and let's hire more drivers. He thought we should expand it to seven days a week, you know 18-hour day operation, why not? He said we can afford it here. He said he did not want to count on SMART or any other third-party servers to drive the seniors where they need to be. He said when he becomes a community organizer, that is exactly the route he is going to take. So, with that, he thanked the Committee for all their efforts. We have done a great job, and we are heading in the right direction.

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL ISSUES: None**

**ADJOURNMENT** – There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:52 P.M.

  
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Cortney Hanson, City Clerk

  
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Robert J. Gatt, Mayor

  
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Transcribed by Deborah S. Aubry

Date approved: October 23, 2023