



MINUTES
Committee of the Whole
Monday, August 28, 2023 @ 5:30 p.m.
Tony Benavides Lansing City Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER

Council President Wood called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

PRESENT

Council Member Carol Wood
Council Member Jeremy Garza
Councilmember Adam Hussain
Councilmember Peter Spadafore
Councilmember Patricia Spitzley- arrived at 5:33 p.m.
Councilmember Brian T. Jackson
Councilmember Jeffrey Brown
Councilmember Ryan Kost

OTHERS PRESENT

Sherrie Boak, Council Office Manager
Jim Smiertka, City Attorney,
Amanda O'Boyle, City Attorney
Emily Linden, Internal Auditor
Mark Lawrence, Mayor's Office
Paul Elam, Advance Peace
Chief Backus, LPD
Nancy Mahlow

Minutes

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER GARZA TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM AUGUST 21, 2023.
MOTION CARRIED 8-0.

Public Comment

Ms. Mahlow acknowledged Council for their assistance with the Eastside Festival along with all their sponsors.

DISCUSSION/ACTION

ORDINANCE – Amendment to Chapter 210, Section 210.01; uses of Council Chambers and Conference Room

Council President Wood summarized the ordinance amendments, acknowledging the public hearing was held.

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER GARZA TO APPROVE THE ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 210, SECTION 210.01. MOTION CARRIED 8-0.

DISCUSSION/RESOLUTION – Setting a Public Hearing; Ordinance Amendment to Chapter 288.21- Chief Strategy Officer

Council President Wood went through the amendments including lines 8-16 of the amendments in the duties including language:

Review departments for efficiencies, redundancies, continuity of services, and cost savings.
Make recommendations on how to reduce costs and generate revenues in the future for the City of Lansing. Policy recommendations, including those in (c), may include but are not limited to:

Long term financial forecasts

Consult with city finance director and actuary for the police and fire retirement board and employee retirement services retirement board on financial management practices

Administration strategic planning and execution efforts

The other amendment is line 28 of page 1 which speaks to reporting to Council in March and September. Originally proposed was “every other month”, with a focus before the budget adoption and before budget priorities.

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER GARZA TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION TO SET THE PUBLIC HEARING FOR SEPTEMBER 11, 2023 TO AMEND CHAPTER 288.21 CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER.

Council Member Jackson asked if there was anything deleted, and Council President Wood confirmed.

Council Member Brown asked about the newest employee, Jake Brower and his two jobs. Council President Wood stated the Chief Strategy Officer and Budget Analyst are the same person. The goal with this recent hiring was to hire one person, but the ordinance does not preclude them from working in another role. In comparison the ordinance for investigator states they are precluded from working in other roles.

Council Member Hussain asked for clarification on line 16. Council President Wood stated the language came from the Mayor’s office. Mr. Lawrence stated he did not have a role in how it was written, but read it as “execution efforts on strategic planning”. Council Member Spitzley asked if this is the “Administration’s strategic planning and execution efforts”. Council Member Hussain asked or is it the “administration of the strategic planning and execution of that”. Council Member Spitzley asked to amend (3) “Administration’s strategic planning and execution efforts”.

Council Member Spadafore referred page 1, line 25 “the administrative activities of the City Council....” and asked its intent. Council President Wood stated line 28 changes was agreed upon by the Council leadership and the Mayor. Council Member Spitzley referred to line 27 and 28 “the City Council and the Mayor, or mayoral designee, and the Chief Strategy officer shall report to City Council”.... She asks that it be the Chief Strategy Officer do the reporting not the designee. Council President Wood stated it is all three – Council, Mayor and CSO. Mr. Smierkta confirmed it does not violate the Charter.

MOTION CARRIED 8-0.

Presentations

Administration and Advance Peace Update on the Gun Violence in the City

Council President Wood acknowledged to the Chief and Mr. Elam that most items on efforts were announced in a press conference, but felt this was a good opportunity for a public presentation.

Council Member Jackson wanted it noted that Advance Peace and LPD are separate entities.

Chief Backus started by stating the July statistics were 16 non-fatal shootings with 12 of those from three (3) incidents. When there are 12 different non-fatal from 3 incidents, these are tragic events. When LPD focuses on non-fatal, they look at relationships and is it contributing to retaliatory violence. Of the 12, all are still open cases. Chief Backus continued by stating that there are a few factors; some victims are not intended victims, therefore they cannot tell who was shooting or who was behind the shooting, and the next type is who was targeted, and they are more reluctant to speak. Where there is no evidence or camera's, that stalls the information to the prosecutor. In August there was 4 non-fatal shootings, 1 homicide related to one of the non-fatal shootings. What happened in July has not carried forward into August and worked to identify all those included in those shootings. Council Member Spitzley asked if there is information on how this leads to progress with the Advance Peace program.

Council Member Jackson asked if there is a connection to the shootings. Chief Backus confirmed if they look at homicides in the last 60 days, none of the homicides were not related to one of the shootings earlier. He clarified he was not comfortable saying that the non-fatal are not related to each other.

Mr. Elam explained that he is based out of MPHI in Okemos, and acting strategy officer with Advance Peace that was launched in October 2022. This is a peace maker fellowship that identifies 15 individuals that reside in the south side of Lansing. That was a decision was made by the city and county, based on district atty, law enforcement, of those 15 that carry and shooting at each other. since that time have identified 16 individuals that are engaged and part of advance peace. At this point those have been involved for 10 months. Of those 15 have not engaged in any illegal activity, 3 have had fire arms arrests. All fellows alive, and 12 have active life match goals. Concerning the violence recently, the Advance Peace initiative that is currently funded is not targeting the entire city, but a small section based on intelligence provided 2 years ago. There is supported investment over the last 3 years, and will be reporting after 18 months in the fellowship. They are currently in 10 months of that 18 months time. They will continue to work with the Mayor, applying for federal and state grants, and recently got \$500,000 from the State, have grants with DOJ for the east side of Lansing and East Lansing.

Council Member Spitzley asked what the average age is for the fellowship. Mr. Elam stated he does not have that at this time but will follow up.

Council Member Kost asked if he was actively involved with the information Chief Backus spoke about. Mr. Elam explained the City of Lansing has an eco system to address gun violence, and Advance Peace is involved in that. Gun violence goes beyond retaliatory and cyclical. Council Member Kost asked if he was involved in the follow up with the July and August shootings. Mr. Elam reiterated they have been involved in the retaliatory and cyclical, not all shootings.

Council President Wood asked what other organizations Advance Peace works with and how they interwork. Mr. Elam detailed their main partner is Ingham County Public Health to provide a set of resources through federal funds, that are actually being granted at this point but not administered yet. Those resources will go towards therapy for the fellows, services in the Ingham County area, hiring additional peacekeepers full time staff employed by MPHI. Council President Wood asked if the resources are teaching them a skill, and if any are currently employed. Mr. Elam stated in the beginning the fellowship did not focus on employment, but life skills development. There are several fellows currently employed, but not based on their involvement with Advance Peace. The current service is therapy, elder circles, transformative travel, life skills and coaching, and connecting them with human services system. Council President Wood asked about the services for women and Mr. Elam confirmed the eligible services is not gender specific, and if they receive information from the resources, they will engage that female in their programs. Council President Wood asked if they are getting referrals from the prosecutors offices, and Mr. Elam stated they are not. They operate on a confidential practice. Law might give them names of the ones they are concerned about, but do not have conversations with who is in fellowship.

Council Member Garza asked if they are offering any training and skills to the members that were mentioned. Mr. Elam reiterated there are 16 engaged, they use evidence based practice, works of criminal justice, life skills development, mentoring, counseling. On their website:

www.advancepeacelansing.org the plans can be seen. The original initial investment was to build the capacity, and the neighborhood change agents and peacekeepers was the initial investment.

Council Member Garza noted the earlier statement made of \$500,000 from the State, and if that would be utilized for other parts of city. Mr. Elam confirmed those funds are to staff up Advance Peace strategy, with the initial round of funding chose to invest all resources in to street outreach, with four (4) individuals. The State funds will be for an administrative assistant and a second position of a full time staff person to work in the County for support. The grant application to Department of Justice was \$2 million and that will let them expand beyond the SW side of Lansing to the SE side. They have 15 fellows and will increase the SW side from 15 to 20. If that is successful obtaining the grant, the fellows will increase. Council Member Garza asked if they have engaged in the neighborhoods. Mr. Elam stated the Federal grant currently has assisted them that have allows staff staff with MPHJ establishing co-chairs with monthly meetings to hear from the community on priorities and concerns.

Council Member Brown asked if there is a preliminary graph on where the area was when Advane Peace started 10 months ago, and where things have gone since Advance Peace came in. Mr. Elam stated they update their information monthly on their website mentioned earlier. They get information from LPD and after vetting the information it goes on their website. In terms of a formal report, they will continue to update in their public meetings, which they old every 12 months, with their next meeting in October. A formal report on the current fellows does not come out until after they hve completed the 18 months of the fellowship.

Council Member Jackson asked if the 16 fellows is based on capacity on the funding or the training. Mr. Elam stated it is due to the capacity, and the contractual obligation was up to 15 fellows, and they have begun looking into more grant funding. Council Member Jackson asked if there are safe places for family members. Mr. Elam confirmed they do have supportive services, and after every shooting occurs, they are on the scene to work with those impacted. They are also working with the national Advance Peace for focusing on a relocation system when they need to temporarily relocate people out of the State for their safety or their families safety.

Council Member Garza asked what the numbers have shown and was told in the last 30 days it appears there are close to 100 individuals carrying, and so the current focus is expanding to the east side of Lansing. They are raising resources to do the expansion, and anticipate the same type of team to do the same work as the west side.

Council President Wood suggested the statement "an uptick" be corrected because every number is a victim and victim family, it isn't "an uptick" but a victim. Mr. Elam apologized if he had offended anyone and it was not meant as derogative.

Council Member Spitzley for Council to be invited to the October meeting mentioned by Mr. Elam, and Mr. Elam confirmed they will be put on the formal invitation list.

Closed Session

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER GARZA AT 6:25 p.m.

Pursuant to MCL 15.268(1)(h) of the Open Meetings Act, City Council will recess into closed session to consult with the City Attorney to consider material exempt from discussion or disclosure by state statute. Specifically, to discuss written material from the City Attorney provided under attorney-client privilege and attorney work-product, and which is also exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act pursuant to MCL 15.243(1)(g).

Council Member Jackson stepped away from the meeting at 6:26 p.m. and did attend the Closed Session which started at 6:27 p.m.

ROLL CALL VOTE, MOTION CARRIED 7-0.

Reconvene

Council President Wood reconvened the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

OTHER

No other topics.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Sherrie Boak, Recording Secretary, Lansing City Council

Approved by the Committee September 11, 2023