

**THE CITY OF DEXTER
VIRTUAL CITY COUNCIL GOAL SETTING WORK SESSION
SATURDAY, JANUARY 16, 2021**

A. CALL TO ORDER

The City Council Meeting was called to order at 9:00 AM by Mayor Keough held via an online Zoom conference call permitted by State of Michigan law.

B. ATTENDANCE:

Council Members: Paul Cousins, Donna Fisher, Jamie Griffin, Wa-Louisa Hubbard, Julie Knight, Zach Michels

Mayor: Shawn Keough

Student Representatives: Alex Gilbert and Isabella Malek

Also attending: Justin Breyer, Interim City Manager and City Clerk; Marie Sherry, Treasurer/Assessor/Finance Director; Michelle Aniol, Community Development Manager; Dan Schlaff, Public Services Superintendent; Carol Jones, Recording Secretary; residents; and media.

C. NON-ARRANGED PARTICIPATION:

J. Brian Ross of 4209 Inverness is attending the Work Session to watch and listen.

James McCargar of 3580 Hudson Street stated that the framework of this meeting is excellent. He commented on a survey, survey comments, and survey summary that were provided for the agenda packet by Council Member Griffin. Mr. McCargar stated that while he respects the amount of work performed by Council Member Griffin in generating the survey, he shared criticisms of the survey comments, comment anonymity, and survey methodology. He stated that many of the comments were untrue and not useful, and asked that falsehoods be addressed. He feels that the top issues for the coming year would be Covid (top issue), Fire Hall (time for a deadline with a decision and hopefully there is a consensus), and pursuing rank choice voting for Council seats. He has never seen the Council, committees, boards, commissions, and staff working as well as they are now.

Katherine and Steve Becker of 3266 Alpine Street are attending to watch and listen, and both agree with Mr. McCargar's comments.

Cole Miller of 7654 Forest Street stated that in his experience with Council he finds them very approachable to listening to opinions. He feels that the comments indicating that Council's normal processes are sinister and secretive are wrong and do a disservice to the Council and staff. He would like to see the Council work on communications with the Schools, including meeting dates, transportation, roads, and traffic. He feels that more could be done for residents with communications in the form of mailers, media such as Facebook, and door-to-door.

Ryan Henyard of 3577 Shaw Court said that he applauds City Council for doing this event and opening it up to the public. For the student representatives, he values their participation, and hopes that the program continues and leads to an influx of civic education in the Schools. He believes that the students have submitted good feedback and created real change. He feels that the City is going in a good direction with the goals from 2020-2021, and in particular walkability. He indicated that he shares Mr. McCargar's concerns regarding the survey comments included in the packet. He stated that it hurt him to read the comments, and believes that a number of them were defamatory towards Council and staff. He asked Council to be aware of the intention versus the impact of the survey efforts, and that such efforts be more transparent, shared across multiple platforms, and go through normal City processes. He stated that he thinks this community is compassionate and the comments do not represent all residents. He wanted to thank the City for keeping the public informed.

Ron and Mary-Ellen Miller of 7654 Forest Street indicated that they joined the meeting after attending the Dexter Forum.

D. AGENDA ITEMS DISCUSSED:

1. Student Representatives Report – Alex Gilbert and Isabella Malek

Both Mr. Gilbert and Ms. Malek were recognized for their second year of participation in the Student Representative Program. Mr. Gilbert reported on potential mentoring of students and that he would like to be able to hear all of the Council Members' views, and he asked if there could be a plan put in place to accomplish this.

Discussion followed on mentoring benefits for all of the student representatives and for the City; recognition of students; education on administration; and involvement and engagement of students on issues. Discussion also included education on environmental issues and the wastewater treatment plant.

2. Information provided in the packet by Council Member Griffin

Council Member Griffin provided a report on her survey and comments she received from residents that were provided in the work session packet. She indicated that as an elected official she is responsible for soliciting public feedback and felt an obligation to share the comments. She discussed the methodology, her summary, and shared reasons why people do not want to publicly engage with their name attached. She offered thoughts on citizen participation and the creation of sub-committees on citizen engagement and another sub-committee on ordinance preparation. She asked that the comments in the packet not be conflated with her own beliefs.

Discussion followed on the survey information from the packet; public input processes; and the validity of the anonymity of the survey comments.

E. NON-ARRANGED PARTICIPATION:

Jim McCargar of 3580 Hudson Street offered additional comments directed towards Council Member Griffin regarding the survey and comments included in the packet. He asked for the disavowal of conspiracy theories; the providing of context; taking accountability for the survey design; and to consider the impact of the comments on others.

Ryan Henyard of 3577 Shaw Court discussed positionality and influences on the survey; the content and feedback; the impacts of the survey; and what could be the consequences if redacted or amended. He would like to see the packet amended to disavow anonymous comments that are not fact, and to show some discretion.

Sanam Arab of 6896 Wellington Drive stated that the survey comments included in the packet were extremely difficult to read. She commented on prior statements made by Council Member Griffin and a previous meeting that she had with Council Member Griffin, and similarities between those statements and the comments provided through the survey.

Cole Miller of 7654 Forest Street stated that it is disingenuous to claim anonymity when the survey comments were generated by anti-Avalon people. There has been no apology to staff.

F. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 AM by Mayor Keough.

Respectfully submitted,

Justin Breyer
Interim City Manager and City Clerk

Approved for Filing: _____