

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NOVI  
MONDAY, JANUARY 4, 2021 AT 7:00 P.M.**

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

In accordance with the provisions of the Open Meeting Act this meeting was held remotely.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

Mayor Gatt, present from City of Novi, Oakland County, State of Michigan  
Mayor Pro Tem Staudt, present from City of Novi, Oakland County, State of Michigan  
Member Casey, present from the City of Novi, Oakland County, State of Michigan  
Member Crawford, present from the City of Novi, Oakland County, State of Michigan  
Member Fischer, present from City of Novi, Oakland County, State of Michigan  
Member Maday, present from City of Novi, Oakland County, State of Michigan  
Member Mutch, present from City of Novi, Oakland County, State of Michigan

**ALSO PRESENT:** Peter Auger, City Manager  
Victor Cardenas, Assistant City Manager  
Elizabeth Saarela, City Attorney

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Mayor Gatt clarified the purpose of the meeting was for the interview and appointment to City Council.

**CM 21-01-001 Moved by Crawford, seconded by Casey; MOTION CARRIED: 6-0**

**To approve the Agenda as amended.**

**Roll call vote on CM 21-01-001**                      **Yeas: Staudt, Casey, Crawford, Fischer, Mutch, Gatt**  
**Nays: None**

Mayor Gatt explained the purpose of the meeting tonight is to hear from the four applicants for the vacant City Council position. He stated that City Council has extensive background material from their applications. They will give each candidate two minutes to speak. He wanted to keep it fair for everybody. He said each Council Member will be given the opportunity to ask one question of the candidate. He asked Council Members to limit it to one question. After we are done hearing from the four applicants, we will then make a motion to appoint someone to City Council. He pointed out this was a term that will end in November of this year at the next regular City of Novi Election.

**INTERVIEWS AND APPOINTMENT TO CITY COUNCIL**

1. Ramesh Verma

Mr. Verma said he has been living in this City for the last 42 years. He was involved in the storm water management and control. He has been appointed to the Library Board where he served as secretary, as well as vice-president. He was an examiner for Michigan Quality Council leadership, Council of Asian Pacific American Affairs, Vice President of India League of America, Chairman Festival of India, Detroit, UM Medical Center Diversity Council, Chairman UMH Diversity Training and Communication Task Team, Secretary and Vice President for Novi Library Board, City Council, and now serving in the Novi Zoning Board. He believed City Council is well represented by men and women, but not any ethnic communities. He asked City Council to consider him to fill the vacant seat. He thanked him for listening to him and giving him the opportunity to speak. Mayor Gatt thanked Mr. Verma.

Member Crawford said he did not have any questions; he has known Ramesh for years. Quite honestly every one of the resumes that he read were exceptional. He thought any one of the applicants would make a fantastic Council Member.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt echoed the comments of Member Crawford. He said he served with Ramesh and he has done a great job in the past. He did not have any specific questions because he thought he has interviewed him over the last 13 years, a half a dozen times minimum. He thanked him for coming out and said he appreciated it very much.

Member Casey thanked Mr. Verma for stepping forward again. She said she will ask him a question because she will not let him get off this process. She noted that she served on City Council with him and she also served on the Library Board with him. She was aware of his qualifications, but she was curious what made him step forward again. He had mentioned that you served on City Council for a year. She asked why he applied this time. Mr. Verma said the City is in his blood. He was a soldier for the Indian Army, this was also in is in his blood for the services to the City. That is why he was going back again to serve his City. Member Casey thanked him for his answer.

Member Fischer thanked everyone for applying. He too had looked through all the resumes and agree with the earlier comments. He felt that anyone could easily step up to the plate here. He said that he had been in each of their shoes twice interviewing to be appointed to Council and was not selected either time. He did run the following year and he won. He would encourage all of them who were interested to please stay involved and run. He said he believed that it was important for Council to appoint someone who is willing to put their name on the ballot. He asked Mr. Verma if he would run come November. Mr. Verma said that this question came up the last time also. He said when he applied previously, and he got into the City Council he said he did not want to run because he ran one time and did not win. He stated that he wanted his services to the City in any capacity. Member Fischer thanked him for his answer and thanked him for his past service. Member Fischer said he appreciated Mr. Verma stepping forward again.

Member Mutch thanked Mr. Verma for stepping forward and being willing to serve again on City Council. He mentioned that there were several qualified candidates to fill this position, what makes you the best candidate to fill this vacancy at this time? Mr. Verma replied that he has lived in the City for 42 years and he knows the City in different capacities. He felt he was very giving. He has worked with the State and the City doing so many things. He said he wanted to work with everybody whether they are independent or whatever to serve his City. Member Mutch thanked him for stepping forward again and be willing to fulfill this role.

Mayor Gatt said he was not going to ask a question because he knows him very well. They have served together, and he has been one of his strongest and biggest admirers ever since he met him. He said he was the epitome of what makes Novi great. He pointed out to the other three candidates that only one person can be chosen. He said to the three who are not chosen, please continue their quest to serve. He said they will set an example by being such great Novi residents and citizens. Novi is the greatest City in the State of Michigan because of people like you. He echoed Member Fischer and said he was in your shoes also. He did apply once for a vacancy and was not chosen, and he ran the next year and won. He has never lost an election since, so keep on trying. He said they can only appoint one person and all the candidates would be a perfect fit. He thanked Ramesh for his service. If you are not chosen, please continue to serve on the Zoning Board of Appeals.

2. Julie Maday

Ms. Maday appreciated the time to discuss her potential opportunity as a Council woman. She said she has lived in Novi since 2005 except for a few years where she lived overseas in Germany. Her son graduated from Novi High School in 2019 and she has a daughter that is in 11<sup>th</sup> grade at Novi High School. She said she has been fortunate enough over the last 20 years to dedicate much of her time to things that she is passionate about, including public service and community involvement. She has served on the Planning Commission since February of 2018 and she has enjoyed her time serving it that capacity. She felt that serving on City Council would give her the opportunity to expand her personal learning and continue to contribute by making decision within our community that keep Novi a great place to live. Mayor Gatt thanked Ms. Maday and said they would start with questions.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt thanked her for applying for the position. He said he has known her for probably 10 years in various capacities. He stated he did not have any questions for her. He appreciated each of the candidates coming out. Thank you.

Member Casey thanked Ms. Maday for stepping forward for the appointment to City Council. She said her question would be related to something that she wrote in her application. She asked Ms. Maday to expand a little bit more on what she was thinking about when she referenced the City of Novi could improve on trying to bring the community together physically. Ms. Maday said that she knew that in the past we tried to make the Main Street area a place that people would gather and have different events. She stated that it did not turn out exactly the way the City had planned it, in her

opinion. She would love to find new ways to bring all the citizens together in various gathering places. She thought the City does a great job with things like Villa Barr, the ITC Trail, Pavilion Shore Park, and Lakeshore Park, but she still would like to continue to work to try to bring small businesses into our community to the Main Street area that might improve traffic there. She said she would also love to make Forest Park into some type of a holiday market to bring all the citizens together during the holidays, maybe have local breweries, crafters, and local business com in and make every Friday night in December. She thought when the community feels gathered, every benefits. Member Casey thanked her for the thoroughness of that action, and said she liked that answer. She thanked her for stepping forward.

Member Fischer thanked Ms. Maday for stepping forward. He asked her the same question as the previous candidate, on her thought process on how you deliberate and decide on whether you would run in November. Ms. Maday said the answer was quite simple, if the existing Council Members thought she was doing a good job and she was representing the City well, she would. As well as if she thought her decisions were improving the City of Novi, then yes, she would consider running. Member Fischer thanked her.

Member Mutch thanked Ms. Maday for stepping forward and being willing to take on this responsibility. He asked what made her the best candidate to fill this vacancy at this time. Ms. Maday said over the last 30 years whether it was in her workplace or her volunteering capacities, she thought because she has been in so many different places, she has come across a lot of people and a lot of personalities that she might not necessarily agree with in all form, but has somehow managed to learn how to compromise and make decisions that were best for everybody involved and meet our objectives of whatever we are trying to accomplish. Member Mutch thanked her again for stepping forward.

Member Crawford stated he did not have any specific questions and he thanked Ms. Maday for stepping forward. He thought she would make a fantastic Council Member. As he said earlier, he thought all the applicants would also. He also thanked her for her service on the Planning Commission.

Mayor Gatt commented that he did not have any questions. He wanted to say what she said really touched him. He stated that he has been around a long time in this City and this City was made great by the people and the people always used to get together. We had Gala Days, 50's Festival, and other events that brought the community together. He said if she were appointed, he would like to work with her. There was a time when we had Light Up the Night on Main Street. The people would gather on that little stretch of land and it was just a very festive event and very inclusive. It was a way of celebrating the holidays. It behooved him to get back to something like that. Main Street to him was one of the most important parts of the City. He said it just was not what we expected or wanted. He stated that he had some big hopes that Main Street would see some movement this spring. He thanked her for coming out and for her service. He said he looked forward to working with her if she was chosen and if not, thank you for your service on the Planning Commission.

3. Michael Reddy

Mr. Reddy thanked City Council for the opportunity to speak. He stated that after hearing the previous applicants, whoever Council chose that evening would be in great hands. He was hoping that the City of Novi would have some qualified candidates that would step forward. Obviously with Mr. Verma and Ms. Maday, they already had two good quality candidates that they knew personally and could slide right into position and do a good job. He stated that Council has received the information that he presented to them. He said he was the Deputy Mayor for the City of Westland. He was the Fire Chief in the City of Westland for over 16 years. He has been in government for over 22 years. He has been raising his family here and he has a son who just graduated and another son who is a junior at Novi High School. He said he would be happy to answer any questions, but again, they will be well-represented with either one of those two choices. He thought that Council was comfortable with those folks. He just wanted to see that the City continue to prosper, and it has been a great City to live in the past eight years. He thanked them for the opportunity.

Member Casey thanked Mr. Reddy for stepping forward. She stated that his resume from a municipal government was lengthy and very detailed. She was curious from if there was an unmet need in Novi that he believed his skill set could help. Mr. Reddy said he did not believe that there was an unmet need. He felt he could fill the shoes of those that are sitting are being asked. He said he had another view of things by being in government for as long as he has been in government. He thought everyone was doing a wonderful job in the City. He thought he would certainly be able to jump right in and hit the ground running. He thought with his experience he could do what the other two candidates were very familiar with also. He thought they would know their views and the sort of passions that they have. He said he could fill the void, but they have candidates that can fill the void too. He stated that all he wanted to do was to fill the void for 11 months to see you get through to the next election. Member Casey thanked him for the honesty of his answer and for coming forward.

Member Fischer thanked Mr. Reddy. He asked him about his thought process and how he would deliberate towards a run in November. Mr. Reddy replied that he thought the 11 months would be his chance to either show that he could do the job or not do the job. He said it was like having an 11-month interview process with the residents. If the residents came forward and said they like the job that he did, he would like to continue to do that. Maybe they would consider that a run for office, but at this point he said his intentions were just to hopefully fill the spot if they did not have a qualified candidate and it looks like there was. He thought whether he was chosen or not, it will keep the City moving forward in a positive direction. That was his intention, so it would be up to the residents to decide if he would run or not. He would leave it up to them at that point. Member Fischer thanked Mr. Reddy for stepping forward.

Member Mutch thanked Mr. Reddy for stepping forward and being willing to offer his talents and services on behalf of the City. He said he graciously acknowledged the experience of the other candidates and their previous service. He said he was going to

ask the question that he has been asking the other candidates. It is their opportunity to fully consider everybody who has put their name forward. Each candidate comes to the table with a range of experiences and talents that could help them as a City Council over the next 11 months and could help us as a City. He just wanted him to not be so humble for a moment and tell them why he could be the best candidate for Council to consider based on what you would bring to the table. Mr. Reddy said he had 20 plus years in government and has participated in over 400 City Council meetings. He worked for a strong Mayor form of government in the City of Westland. He noted that back when he was a Fire Chief in the administration, he worked for a City Manager in the City of Wayne and for the City Manager in the City of Inkster. He ran all three departments during a transitional period. In a sense he worked for a Mayor, two City Managers and 27 Council Members. He had experience in the different areas of government. He said he knew how to get along with the City Council, City Managers and Mayors, and he understood the process that was involved with being on City Council. Ultimately, you are working for the residents. He knew Council did a great job. He thought he could fill that void, but if they had great candidates that are already here, then he just wanted to put his name forward and make sure that was being filled with someone that could do the job. He said there were qualified candidates that can do that. Member Mutch thanked him and said he appreciated the sentiment behind that. He thought it was also a good reminder that they often see, when folks step forward to serve, there is a huge pool of talented and experienced people in the City. He said it is unfortunate they are only able to select one person through this appointment process. He said if he was not selected, he suggested he find another opportunity to serve and step forward to share his talents. He encouraged him to do so, because from the little bit that was shared, he had a wealth of experience and knowledge that would benefit the City in some capacity. He thanked him for stepping forward.

Mr. Crawford thanked Mr. Reddy for applying for the position. He did not have any questions.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt thanked Mr. Reddy for coming out. He said they do not get very many opportunities to talk to people who had been a Fire Chief in other cities. He asked his opinion on the City's hybrid system of paid on call and full-time firefighters. If he were a Council Member, would he continue to support it or did he think the City should consider a different alternative. Mr. Reddy said that was a great question. He said he thought Novi had a wonderful department and the department could continue to thrive the way that it is thriving. He said in the three department that he ran, all three of cities went through some economic downturn and they suffered a lot more than some other communities. They had to downsize. In doing that downsize they realized that they could only provide the services that they could pay for. He thought Novi has a wonderful department. He did not think they needed to change how the department is run. He has lived here for eight years and never had to use the service and hoped he never will, but it is a great service. He served with Jeff Johnson back when he was in the Southeast Fire Chiefs Association. Novi has a great department, and he would not change a thing. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt thanked Mr. Reddy and said he appreciated that.

Mayor Gatt said he did not have any questions. He stated he believed we had the greatest Chiefs in the State. He said that we are led by the greatest public safety director that you can find in the Country. He said our Fire Chief is trained and honed on our system. He believed it is the model of what new cities should go to and it is more economical, yet it provides the coverage in the safety umbrella that we all want. We are residents to the City as you are too. Mayor Gatt thanked Mr. Reddy and said if he was not chosen, he hoped that he would share his talents with us in another way.

4. Travis Malott

Mr. Malott thanked Council for time to speak. He said the privilege of going last is that he was able to hear everybody. He thought they were all good candidates. He stated that he has lived here for 38 years. He grew up in Whispering Meadows. He stayed and lived at home while he went to U of M Dearborn. He said the Police Departments were not hiring so he applied out of state but got hired in Farmington Hills. He has been there ever since. He stated that he is a narcotics detective. He also has been a coach for Novi's Varsity Ice Hockey Team and dedicated his adult life to public service. Either police work or coaching. He married in 2013. His Dad is retired police officer from Southfield, a brother is officer in Orchard Lake. It is nice to hear about public safety and he is a big advocate. Any consideration is appreciated.

Member Fischer said he was glad to see new faces. He said he would ask the same question. Could he tell him about the deliberative process, and would you consider running and putting your name on the ballot? Mr. Malott replied that when he thought about getting involved, he was determined to do that. He had made up his mind that he would run. He would like to serve the City any way he can. Member Fischer thanked him again.

Member Mutch wondered what makes him the best candidate to fill this vacancy at this time. Mr. Malott commented that the City is doing a great job. He had no complaints. With his background in public safety and in serving community brings a unique voice to Council. He believed it would be a great fit.

Member Crawford thanked him for applying. He echoed his previous statement that all four of the candidates would make great addition to Council. He said he hoped the three who are not chosen with apply for other Boards and Commissions because they are too talented to not be involved.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt asked him if he had played or coached a State Championship Team. Mr. Malott said he started in 1999 or 2000, he was one of the first players when they started the program. He played the first two years and then his brothers played after that. He was an assistant coach on the 2011. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt asked him, for full disclosure, if he went to school with Member Fischer. Mr. Malott replied yes, he was one year behind him. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt thanked him for coming out and said it was great to have someone in public safety personnel interested in serving.

Member Casey asked him to expand a little bit on his application where it relates to the ability for the City to have growth and balance with woods and wetlands. Mr. Malott stated that he did not mean it in a negative way. He did not feel that the City was doing anything wrong. He said it was a unique community with parks and wetlands. It was one of the best cities because of those things. He said he sees other communities with cement and no character. He just wanted to ensure there is a balance between growth and preserving. Member Casey said she just wanted to give him the opportunity to expand on that. She thanked him for his interest.

Mayor Gatt said he did not have any questions. He said he knows his background; he touched his heart. Anyone who serves in law enforcement and wants to serve more by serving local community, he applauds them. He said he hoped if he was not chosen, he will make himself available in other ways. He had already insinuated a run for City Council. He stated that he cannot wait until November, a person must declare candidacy long before then. Stay safe and stay aware of what is going on in Novi. His answer shows he was aware and well balanced. He agreed that Novi has wonderful blend of parkland, green spaces, buildings, cement, and homes, residential and commercial. He thanked him for coming out and wished him the best.

Mayor Gatt said the last two candidates said they were deferring to the first two candidates with more experience within the City of Novi. He said he was focused on the City of Novi and what a person has done within City limits. He said he had applied to fill a vacancy and was not chosen but went on to serve on different Boards and Commissions. He thought that was the way to go. For someone to come on without experience of serving on a Board and Commissions is difficult, but not impossible. He was thinking more of the first two candidates. He said he had one person in mind who stood out above the rest a little bit by some of the answers that were provided.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said this is maybe the fifth, sixth or seventh person he has had to select a person to join Council. They were all under different circumstances. He looked for someone who has some experience on Boards and Commissions. He said every Council Member there had a long background on Boards and Commissions. He stated that another thing that was important to him what that the person is representative of the person they are replacing, whether it's some viewpoints, or importance of balance between male and female members on City Council. He said in this situation, both of those are well-served by Ms. Maday.

**CM 21-01-002            Moved by Staudt, seconded by Gatt; MOTION CARRIED: 4-2**

**To appoint Julie Maday to City Council, with a term ending November 2021.**

Member Mutch said as Mayor Pro Tem Staudt alluded to those who have been on City Council for a while have done this several times over the years as various members have departed for various reasons. He said it was always challenging because, they get so many great candidates who step forward. It made it challenging to pick from that pool of candidates and let other folks know that they were not our first choice. He stated that

each Council Member came at this from a different perspective, they each have their personal priority that they look to accomplish during their time on City Council and perspectives that we bring to the table based on their personal experiences. He said his first choice for this vacancy is Mr. Verma because of the experience that he has. These are challenging times for the City of Novi. We are currently in a pandemic, the likes of which we have never seen. They were rapidly approaching budget time which is probably one of the most difficult things for new members to kind of get up to speed on. He said they are in a situation where our finances are doing well. He thought that Mr. Verma, with his experience and his previous service, would be the best at this time. He said it was not a knock to Ms. Maday's service to the City. She served on the Planning Commission. He said he had a chance to read through their Commission meeting minutes and see her input that she has provided. She does a good job on the Planning Commission. He said at this time, in this context, Mr. Verma would be his first choice for this position to fill the vacancy because he thought that was the kind of experience that they need right now.

Member Fischer agreed and said this was a tough one. He said he looked back at old applications and some of the old appointments, he truly felt that while this is probably the lowest number of applicants who have applied for vacancy on City Council, it is by far the most qualified. He did think they have covered that well tonight and he said he would be comfortable supporting any one of the applicants. He echoed the reasons that Mayor Pro Tem Staudt indicated and he was comfortable supporting the motion and supporting Ms. Maday. Obviously with Member Breen, now Representative Breen who is leaving, left us one female on City Council. He thought that was a bit of a disservice so that factored into his mind. He stated that he wanted all the different viewpoints are shown on City Council. He said the exciting thing that he heard from several different people and their perspective; it is a freshness to the City. Some of the newer residents stepping forward, some of the people who are willing to step forward with or without a ton of experience. He thought Ms. Maday really struck that balance as someone who has a fresh perspective, fresh eyes, but also understands how the City operates. He said he was very comfortable supporting the motion.

Member Casey thanked the four candidates again for stepping forward. She said it was an awkward conversation to have as they were sitting there listening to them. As she looked through the applications and at where we are as a City, there are a couple of things that some of the previous speakers have already noted that are important to her. She said right now she was the only woman, so she will speak from that perspective. She explained that it is not just that we look for an applicant who is similar in some fashion to the previous candidate, but also someone that represents a portion of our community. She stated that they may not all be represented on this Council. She believed that in the times that we are in, with the conversations that we have had as a Council related to the challenges that COVID have brought, not just to them, but to the State and what that means from a budget perspective, what that means to our residents, and to our long-term plans. She felt having somebody who can step in who has experience sitting on City Council, they could just come in. There is a learning curve takes more than a couple of months to get fully up to speed. She stated that when she weighs all the candidates, she thought it was really the need for Council to have somebody who can step right into

the seat and be ready to start on day one. Her first choice also would have been Mr. Verma.

Mayor Gatt said someone mentioned that this was a difficult conversation, and it is. He wanted the four applicants to understand that sitting on City Council, sitting up at the dais with maybe a hundred people in the audience who are railing against the project that is going to be built near their homes and you think it is the best thing for the City, investing for the 60,000 people and maybe a couple of your fellow members do not agree with you, it is an uncomfortable situation and that is what we do. They always make tough decisions, anybody can make easy decisions, but to be a Council Member you must make the tough decisions that are uncomfortable and sometimes causes problems with neighbors or relatives or friends. He said they think the world of all four candidates, but only one will be chosen. Mr. Verma is a perfect candidate, but so is Ms. Maday.

**Roll call vote on CM 21-01-002**

**Yeas: Fischer, Gatt, Staudt, Crawford**

**Nays: Casey, Mutch**

**AUDIENCE COMMENT: None**

**ADJOURNMENT** – There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned at 7:54 P.M.

---

Cortney Hanson, City Clerk

---

Robert J. Gatt, Mayor

---

Transcribed by Deborah S. Aubry

Date approved: January 25, 2021