

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NOVI
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2024 AT 7:00 P.M.**

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

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL: Mayor Fischer, Mayor Pro Tem Casey, Council Members Gurumurthy, Heintz, Smith, Staudt, Thomas

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

CM 24-02-24 Moved by Casey, seconded by Thomas; MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

To approve the Agenda as presented.

Roll call vote on CM 24-02-24 **Yeas: Casey, Gurumurthy, Heintz, Smith,
Staudt, Thomas, Fischer**
Nays: None

PUBLIC HEARINGS: None

PRESENTATIONS: None

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS PRESENTATIONS

1. Lee Mamola - Construction Board of Appeals

Mr. Mamola said he couldn't remember how long he's been on the Construction Board of Appeals, except that it's probably been close to 20 years. He said he is a registered architect with 50 years of experience, much of it in the technical and design areas. He said the Construction Board of Appeals cannot grant a variance from the code requirements, but it has the power to interpret the building code. They only meet a handful of times each year. They also grant variances to construction engineering standards, which is an ordinance. He said in recent years there have been appointments of people that are not design professionals, engineers, or architects. He said it's critical that people are appointed are tied to the construction industry or professionals in those industries.

2. Tiffany Nair – Board of Review

Ms. Nair was not present.

3. Bob O'Donnell – Corridor Improvement Authority

Mr. O'Donnell was not present.

4. Mary Angela Winter – Beautification Commission

Ms. Winter said she was encouraged to apply by a member of the Beautification Commission. She said she doesn't have a lot of gardening experience, but she didn't think that was necessary. She said her strengths are organizational skills, attention to detail, and leadership skills. She has a desire to serve the community. She mentioned she has been an election inspector for a number of years.

5. Peter Winter – Board of Review

Mr. Winter said he was on the Board of Review as a full member for maybe 10 years and resigned for health reasons that have since been resolved. He said he would bring experience to the board. He's been an attorney for almost 50 years and a real estate broker for 25. He said he was qualified for the alternate position.

MANAGER/STAFF REPORT:

City Manager Cardenas said similar to last week he wanted to address a Council policy due to the number of messages they've received from companies or religious groups. Last year the City Council chose to amend its rules to cease the issuance of any kind of proclamation or statements in support of any individual or entity. Novi remains a community that embraces love, humanity, and diversity but in light of some of those instances and adverse reactions to past Council resolutions or proclamations, the City Council determined that it was better not to involve itself in things that don't have involvement in day-to-day operation of the city. The City Council is not equipped to address or resolve issues of national or international significance. City staff and elected leaders hear the concerns shared in this public forum and want everyone to know they will not stand for any violence against any group. Novi's Police Officers are well trained and will protect our residents and visitors alike. Any reported acts of violence including hate crimes will be fully investigated and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

He updated Council on the work happening on Wixom Road, which remains closed between 10 Mile and 11 Mile. They are making good progress. They've heard concerns about an area where construction equipment is being parked on a private road. They will restore the property to the condition it was in prior to the start of the project and have shared with the contractor that they can't park on the private street or in any right-of-way. The project should wrap up in 3 to 4 weeks.

ATTORNEY REPORT: None

AUDIENCE COMMENTS:

Mubashir Fazil, 47539 Cheltenham Dr, said he has been a resident of Novi for 13 years. He was requesting that Council support the ceasefire efforts in Gaza. Supporting a ceasefire in Gaza is not only just but aligns with the values of liberty and justice that our nation loves.

He said he wouldn't delve into the historical aspects of Palestine or the stats of current conflict because he noticed they only see stats as numbers which dishonors the dead. He said picture yourself comfortably at home with your family when a group of people forcibly enter, mistreat your loved ones, and demand evacuation. If you ask why, they say that if they don't take it from you, someone else will. Seeking help from authorities results in an ultimatum to vacate within 24 hours or face imprisonment. Consider the suffocation and helplessness that would consume you. He said it's challenging to fathom, but it raises the question "what if this were to happen to us?". He said that question was posed to him by his daughter. He asked how he should answer her. To tell her that we are the strongest nation on the face of the earth and that will never happen. He said even if we don't uphold the values of liberty and justice, he would be lying to her because history has shown how nations and empires got destroyed when injustice became a norm. He said we love our country too much to see it falling into the same trap. He said the City Manager reminded them that the City does not deal with things that are of international crisis. They've heard from students and their parents. Isn't it your duty to hear and act on issues of concern to the local community. He requested that they don't shut the doors on them by hiding behind some Council Rules that are open to interpretation. He implored Council to advocate for a ceasefire.

Rida Salim, 26433 Mandalay Circle, said yesterday was the Super Bowl, sorry, the Gaza Bowl. She listed statistics and said there is no lack of knowledge regarding the atrocities the civilians of Palestine faced. She said a bunch of Novi residents unified and spoke regarding their request for a ceasefire resolution. The residents spoke and awaited our esteemed leaders to pass a ceasefire resolution. The community heard their campaign promises for their values of public safety and justice for all. She said they've asking them to represent them and their voices. She said you must listen to the voices of the people you represent and vote for ceasefire today. This goes beyond Novi and tells the world that we stand for peace, harmony, and justice for all. She asked for a moment of silence for all of the Palestinians killed, injured, and driven out of their homes.

Ishtiaq Ahmad, 22066 Picadilly, said he has been a resident for 10 years. He wanted to share his personal experience of people's generosity and acceptance of people of the City of Novi regardless of how they look and their religion. He said he felt this generosity and humanity from his neighbors when he arrived 10 years ago. He said all four of his neighbors reached out and welcomed him. He said it was extraordinary because it had never happened to him. He said they are asking their government, which is funding this war with our tax dollars, which makes it a Novi issue. He said they propose a ceasefire, so no more lives are lost using their tax dollars. He asked that they represent their voices that we do not support any loss of life, people being displaced, and we want this war to end. He said no racism, no inequality, no intimidation, which is being fueled due to this war.

Sarah Ansari, a Novi resident, said she spoke last week and shared insights into the challenges young Muslim girls in Novi face due to the ongoing conflict in Palestine. She said she continues to advocate for the same cause. In recent months there has been a notable surge in hate speech, hate crimes, and Islamophobia creating an atmosphere of insecurity for Muslims across various age groups and backgrounds. She said the

incidents are not isolated as exemplified by distressing cases in cities near us. Statistics from reputable organizations such as the Council on American Islamic Relations, also known as Care Michigan, and the Anti-Defamation League, underscore the gravity of the situation. She said discrimination complaints have seen a significant uptick, particularly in public schools and universities. This perpetuates harmful stereotypes and fosters an environment of fear for Muslims in Michigan. She said within the educational setting in high school where the Muslim population is limited, fewer young girls wear the hijab. She said her visible identity as a Muslim has contributed to a heightened sense of vulnerability. This dynamic is reflected in the experiences of young girls who are fearful of attending school daily living with constant uncertainty about their safety. She emphasized that the Gaza conflict is not an international affair but holds domestic implications given the substantial funding primarily sourced from the tax dollars of citizens. She said as representatives of this community, they wield the power to influence, change and advocate for peace in the name of humanity. She implored them to consider the dire consequences of the current situation and urged for a permanent and immediate ceasefire in Gaza. She said their leadership can make a profound difference in fostering a safer and more inclusive environment for all.

Fatima Khan, 26565 Anchorage Ct., said she wanted to echo the sentiments of the others who have called for a ceasefire. She said she has two elementary aged children, and they are wondering why their president is funding a genocide where almost half the population consists of children. She said as a community we need to show our values when we can. We need to call for a ceasefire and send a message to not only the children who are being massacred in Gaza but also our own children in Novi. That we as a community stand on the side of humanity, that we speak up when we see egregious acts of violence, especially when our tax dollars are providing that violence. That we step up and do the right thing and call to end this awful assault that has left children orphaned and murdered. She said she hoped our city will join the other cities that have called for a ceasefire and stand true to our values.

Hannah Ansari said she wanted to talk about the kids in Palestine. She said it makes her very sad to see so many kids, who are just like her, being hurt in Palestine. They have lost their parents and siblings. They have no home, no food, no water, no hospitals, and no schools. They have no one to take care of them. That's not fair. She said she has a house to live in, a bed to sleep in, food to eat, and a family who takes care of her. She said every morning she wakes up and goes to school and sees her friends and plays outside. Children in Palestine are not able to have the same life as her and they didn't do anything to deserve this. She asked for the support in calling for a ceasefire to save the kids in Palestine.

Arita Zaman, 24411 Surfside Rd., said they are calling for the introduction of a resolution asking for a ceasefire between Palestine and Israel. She said a question many of them may have is how is this even relevant to the city. She said a former Mayor said we should not take a political position on anything other than our roads, sewers, public safety, and the things Council deals with. She said she would talk about why public safety is an important factor in what makes this issue relevant. She said this past October, a 6-year-

old Wadea Al Fayoume, a Palestinian-American, was stabbed to death in Chicago. In November, three students at the University of Vermont were shot while walking and wearing the traditional Palestinian scarf. A Muslim student at Stanford University was struck by a car. She said last week a 23-year-old Palestinian American was stabbed while coming home from a Palestinian protest. She said these recent events highlight a very disturbing trend and although they didn't occur within our city, they reflect a broader issue of discrimination and violence that threaten the safety of all our residents. She said Novi is a diverse community and incidents like these sow fear and insecurity among us. By advocating for a ceasefire resolution, we show our commitment to peace, tolerance, and respect for human rights. She said it's not just about distant conflicts, it's about safeguarding our community's wellbeing and upholding our values. She urged the Council to consider the resolution as a crucial step towards promoting public safety and inclusivity within Novi.

Sultana Haque, 23955 Wintergreen Circle, said her family loves living in Novi because it provides them with a very caring, safe, and healthy environment. She said the current war in Gaza is affecting part of our community in a number of ways. All wars are evil, but this war in Gaza sees such a high number of women and children being killed. Kids are suffering from lack of food, water, medical supplies, lost homes, lost family. She said our kids are watching social media and the news and it's affecting their mental health. She said there is a safety issue, an unprecedented surge in bias and violence against people looking or dressing a certain way. She said this is making kids worried for their safety and parents are forced to tell their kids to be vigilant because you never know what could happen. She said introducing a declaration for ceasefire in Gaza to save lives and alleviate suffering of people in Gaza will bring comfort to our residents knowing that our city is on the right side of history and is not hesitant to stand for a cause that is hurting so many in our community.

Asma Zahoor, 24689 Picara Drive, said her family has been a part of this community in many different aspects. She said her kids were taught at school to help those that cannot help themselves and are now watching as thousands of kids in Gaza are starving to death and humanitarian aid is being blocked. The school district focuses on kids mental health is neglecting to see the stress and emotions that our kids are experiencing because they feel no one is listening. Kids like them are being bullied and kids like that are being kidded in Palestine just because they exist. A genocide is unfolding before their eyes and their community is watching silently. She said it's disheartening to our kids. They are scared that on the flip of a dime, they could be targeted. She urged them to vote on a ceasefire resolution and show the kids that the Novi community is listening and standing up for kids who are suffering and that we practice what we preach. Helping those who can't help themselves doesn't just apply to our Novi community, but globally. She said to set an example that the wonderful lessons learned at Novi Schools are carried out into the real world, showing our Novi kids that every life matters. She said if we are teaching such wonderful lessons to our kids at schools, it is our responsibility as adults and role models to implement them and show that a ceasefire resolution not only calls for peace in Palestine, but peace of mind for students in Novi.

Miriam Zahoor, a Novi resident, said she is a freshman in high school. She said she didn't just want to talk about the statistics of what's happening in Palestine, but to show how it affects them. She said she and her friends decided to boycott companies that support Israel to show their support. She said they don't have a big enough platform to spread their message, but they're doing their part. She said they as a Council can do their part on their big platform and share the message of peace on behalf of the people in Gaza. She said they can act by protecting and saving over 66,000 injured kids in Gaza who can't fend for themselves. They can help kids like her who are trying to protect the people of Palestine. She said as a teenage girl, she can relate to the feeling of always wanting to be safe and having a meaningful future. The daily challenges she dealt with are homework, school, and chores. She said the daily challenges the people of Palestine face were lacking basic resources. They have the threat of violence every day. She said by believing in the wellbeing of Palestinians, we shouldn't just stand her and do nothing because many lives are at stake. She said its genocide.

Meena Ansari, 40620 Camborne Lane, said she is a mother of three and an educator in the Novi Community School District. She stood before them to express her unwavering support for a ceasefire resolution. She said the impact of the war in Gaza extends beyond international borders affecting our nation and local communities. Unfortunately, the conflict has given rise to a surge in hate crimes with incidents of anti-Semitism and islamophobia escalating significantly. She said according to the Anti-Defamation League, anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S. have surged 337% and Michigan alone record 44 reported incidents of antisemitism. She said in 16 days, the Council on American Islamic Relations reported a 178% rise in complaints during the last 3 months of 2023. She said Care Michigan reported a distressing over 300% increase in discrimination and complaints with nearly 45% related to incidents in public schools and universities. She said one incident involved an eight grade Palestinian Muslim student at a middle school in Ann Arbor who faced discriminatory comments from school counselors. She said a Farmington Hills man was charged with terrorism for inciting violence against Palestinians in Dearborn on social media. She said the war's impact is not confined to headlines; it affects their daily lives. She said they wake up to heartbreaking images of innocent lives lost, creating an atmosphere where our children feel unsafe in school and Muslim women wearing the Hijab face potential hate crimes. She urged Novi to join other communities in calling for a ceasefire. She said by doing so, we align ourselves with the human side demonstrating our commitment to compassion and understanding.

A student from Novi High School said they were learning about the Holocaust in her history class and the word holocaust actually meant a program of mass murder but has become synonymous with the event that massacred millions of Jews not that long ago. She said she wondered if generations into the future people will look at the events of today and call it the genocide. She said will people we see on the news today be talked about tomorrow as people who could have played a role in stopping it. Will we become the people who said nothing and turned a blind eye towards people being oppressed? Will we become the people who ignored the tragedy just because it's not in front of us? Will we become the people who looked at the suffering and didn't bother to act? Will we become the people who saw the pain in the news and merely turned it off because it

might've made us uncomfortable? Or will we become the people who regardless of the odds, did whatever they could to end it? The people who didn't look at it politically, but looked at it morally, the people who did what was right even if it wasn't easy. She said she knew it might sound pointless to call for a ceasefire resolution on the city level when you can't control it nationally, but this has the power to send a message to the federal government that their people won't stand for the oppression any longer.

Firdaus Maldar, 39565 Westminster Circle, said children are always ours, every of them across the globe and she was beginning to suspect that whoever is incapable of recognizing this may be incapable of morality. She said three children are killed every hour and two mothers are killed every hour. She said we've become numb to the numbers. She told the story of a 6-year-old girl who died when her family tried to evacuate and was able to be rescued. She asked them to close their eyes and imagine yourself with your arms around your child as you brace yourself because the building next door was bombed. She said the children are always ours, every single one of them.

Alia Malik, 47530 Alpine Dr., said the savagery that we are witnessing for the past 129 days in Gaza has seeped into our communities in the United States, therefore action from every one of our leaders at every level has to be taken. She said every time her family leaves their home, she is fearful and anxious for their safety. She wondered if she would get a phone call that someone in her family had been stabbed 26 times or shot on their way to Thanksgiving dinner. She said apart from the fear for her safety, her mental and emotional wellbeing is gone. She said she feels guilty because she can eat a meal and drink clean water while her fellow human beings are being starved and forced to drink water from the rain and puddles. Because she can hug and kiss and hold her children while there are mothers and fathers who don't have that privilege anymore. Because she can take Tylenol while children are getting their legs amputated and women are giving birth through c-sections with any anesthesia. She said the City of Novi has always been known to be a leader and not a follower. She was pleading with them to get a ceasefire resolution on the agenda and to pass it without hesitation. She said to put our great city on the right side of history.

Sofia, senior from Novi High School, said she wasn't religious, was not Muslim or Jewish and has no formal connection to Palestine, but this is a humanitarian crisis. She asked them to change the rules and introduce a ceasefire. She said humanitarian aid is not reaching Palestine and children are starving. She said they heard a lot of statistics, which are valuable and necessary to understand the magnitude of the issue. She said imagine having to head airplanes, bombs, gunfire and tanks 24/7. She said half of the people that are dying are children. She said they have the power to change the rules and introduce a ceasefire. The city, the people, and the students are holding you responsible to that.

Lina, a senior from Novi High School, said as an Arab Muslim in the community, she was deeply hurt by the lack of empathy for our brothers and sisters in Palestine. She said Detroit and Gaza are about the same size and part of the population were murdered in Gaza. For 128 days, this genocide has continued. We have the privilege of sitting there without worrying about safety. There are over a million people in Gaza that don't have

that luxury. They have starved and died, fled and survived and now there's physically nowhere else to go. She said they are running out of time. Introducing a ceasefire resolution is our duty and privilege that allows us to be safe. She asked how we can pride ourselves in diversity and love without supporting a ceasefire. She said they are pleading for them to show support in this deafening silence. She said people are being murdered and we're watching from our phone screens. She said there are over 30,000 deaths and over 10,000 of those are children. The Novi Community School District website says the district serves over 6,900 children; imagine every student in Novi gone. She said we need to support ceasefire efforts in Gaza because they are running out of time.

Radia Zaman, a freshman at Novi High School, urged Council to call for peace, justice, and to introduce a resolution for permanent ceasefire in Gaza. She said as a hijabi Muslim woman, she was scared for her safety. She said there's been a spike in Islamophobia and antisemitism. She said safety for Muslims has been severely impacted and gave examples of recent events. She said students fear for their safety every day in school because of the spike in gun violence in school and asked much more of this we can take. She said there's another war going on in Ukraine from 2022, but that didn't increase hate crimes in America and that did not increase the risk of World War III. She said calling for a permanent ceasefire would have eased tensions in all parties and all localized hate crimes would have been subsidized. She said if there's a ceasefire tomorrow, we don't have any role models to look after. She said the leaders in Washington are not listening and asked for a ceasefire resolution to ease their pain, fear, anger, and frustration.

Sarwat Ahmad, 22066 Picadilly Cir., said this was a local issue and is hitting our daily life. The money being spent fighting other people's wars is affecting our lifestyle at home. Bills are getting to be unaffordable. She said don't we have enough problems at home, why are we giving money to an incompetent government that is killing civilians who have nothing to do with it. She said the government is denying all humanitarian aid, killing journalists, medical staff, and using force to displace innocent civilians. We fund them with our tax dollars. We live in America with all ethnicities, and we have peace and harmony because America has a very just social system. Everyone has the chance to grow financially and socially, so Israel should establish the similar values in their government so they can avoid these disasters. She said we should support the ceasefire because the way it is hitting our daily lifestyles, and we should not be giving any money to any country.

A resident spoke about how growing up in the nineties, he has seen wars, one after another and he knows what it's like growing up in a society with fear and images of war keeping you up at night. The Novi community takes pride in high quality education with strong roots in diversity, equality, and justice for all. Free of hostility, hate and discriminatory bullying. We said we have to practice what we preach. He said to let our kids see themselves be among the communities that hold justice over oppression, caring over bigotry, and kindness over violence. He said all members of the community share a united common heritage from a great grandfather prophet Abraham, Jesus, and Muhammad. They all promoted the same message of peace and servitude for the good and betterment of the community. He said during his studies and career, he longer for

his family to have a sense of tranquility. He said his kids deserve a better future, a peaceful future. He said the community deserves a prosperous future. He asked that they support a ceasefire in the Middle East and to be the change you want to see.

Yousif Ansari, a senior at Novi High School, said he would discuss how Israel's war on Gaza resonates within our community in Metro Detroit and in Novi. She wanted to emphasize why a ceasefire resolution is not only necessary but crucial. Our community is a tapestry of various ethnicities and religions all coexisting peacefully. We thrive on the principles of equal representation and consideration for everyone. He said the current conflict has undeniably cast its shadow on our community, eliciting alarming implications. He spoke about recent disturbing incidents. He said those incidents underscore the urgency of addressing the escalating atmosphere of fear and misunderstanding. The Wall Street Journals branding of Dearborn as the Jihad capital of America further contributes to the climate of unease. The residents of Dearborn now fear for their safety as they are uncertain about the potential repercussions of these narratives. He said unfortunately, it's not just Muslims being targeted. There are record levels of antisemitism prevalent in the community. He said on top of that, there is also hate that goes undocumented. He said as the City Council, it was their responsibility to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all residents, regardless of their background. By endorsing a ceasefire resolution in Gaza, they can contribute to several vital outcomes such as preventing the unnecessary loss of lives, actively working to diminish the rising levels of Islamophobia and antisemitism and reaffirm the City's commitment to the core principle of treating every citizen equally. He urged them to consider the impact that actions can have not only on the global stage, but within the community. Fostering an environment where diversity is celebrated, and everyone feels secure and valued. He said let us be the ones who stand on the right side of history.

Farah Baig, 23169 Inverness Court, said it was interesting she had to provide her address because 2 million people in Gaza don't have an address. She said a recent article spoke about what it's like to be a Palestinian today and it struck her that Palestinians are not the first people to endure genocide, but they are the first to have it broadcast in real time. She said it was pathetic that we cannot stop this. She said adopting a ceasefire resolution would not result in an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, however, the resolution would symbolize Novi's commitment to the betterment of our community. She said Novi City Council stands with the values of its constituents and names create a sense of respect and recognition. She said it would be impossible to recite the names of all those who have lost their lives in Gaza, but by passing a resolution for a ceasefire, the Novi community would be recognizing the lives of those who have died, and that the world needs to come together and call for peace.

A student from Novi High School asked for a ceasefire. She said she's made many connections with peers in different grades as well as her teachers. She said everyone agreed on one thing, what's going on in Palestine is not a genocide, it's a war. She said as a Muslim, she celebrates Ramadan. She said when she steps out of her house, she feels safe as a part of the Novi community. She said one million Gazans will spend Ramadan in tents, 24,000 will spend Ramadan as orphans and more than 1,000 children will spend

Ramadan with missing limbs. She said this matter should be looked into and given more thought than has been given so far. She said she and other students have been trying to spread awareness about this matter. She said thousands of children are going to have a gap in their education due to this genocide. They don't have a way to continue their education or go to college to get degrees. She said on behalf of herself and the children of Gaza, she urged them to call for a ceasefire.

A student from Novi High School said they were all aware of the atrocities that Palestine has endured, and she wanted to state her reason for a ceasefire. The impacts teenagers have made by simply not buying a drink, to leading campaigns, starting fundraisers, posting on social media, and more has ignited the flame of a war we are willing to fight to help Palestine. She said she can't just sit here while thousands of Palestinians are being murdered. She said she won't stop until there is a ceasefire, not after they've seen all the atrocities via social media and other platforms. Not after she's seen thousands of children and families getting murdered. She asked how they can be told that America has nothing to do with helping Palestine when American citizens are being killed for merely showing support for Palestine. She said how are you going to tell us no when our constitutional rights, such as protesting against this genocide, has been challenged by racist Islamophobia. The City of Novi must call for a ceasefire as this isn't just an international affair. The Islamophobia that has stemmed from this conflict has impacted so many Novi residents. She said with so many stories of Muslim abuse, she feared the same will happen here. She wanted to use her voice for the silence in Palestine. She said staying silent is not an option.

Ishak Zaman, 24411 Surfside, said diversity is the fabric of metro Detroit and people of all religion, color, nationality, and ethnicity live in peace and harmony. He said we stand by each other when in need. He said the war in Gaza made him afraid because we have seen hate speech and hate mongering from groups. He said when his favorite news outlet, the Wall Street Journal, wrote that Dearborn is the jihad capital, it made him nervous. He said he knew our Police Department was very strong and very dedicated, but he didn't want anything bad to happen to anybody. He said we need to do something. He shared a personal experience of a time when he was afraid for his life when he was a victim of hate speech. He asked that they do something proactively and work against obstacles and work together. He asked them to pass the resolution, so we don't have harassment or hate crimes, and to stop the war in Gaza.

Nanzin Mahmood, 17379 Parkshore, Northville, said she was there to ask for a durable ceasefire. She said this fight became hers when you kill a population's children and their future. There's been an incredible loss of life and over 30,000 people have been killed with half of those being children. She described medical situations that are happening and explained starvation is now being used as a weapon. She said this was their business because when higher levels of government are not listening to the people then local governments have a responsibility to act and send a message to their citizens. She said tax dollars are being used and bombs of American origin are being identified in the rubble. That money could be used for resolving homelessness and even meeting the needs of our own vets. There is another bill going through Congress right now adding to

national backs on the backs of our children. That's why it's part of our business to say something. She said if they don't call for a ceasefire, you're on the wrong side of history, a shameful side with other genocides and you allow hate to breed in your own community. She said calling for a ceasefire resolution that condemns all acts of hate and values all life.

CONSENT AGENDA REMOVALS AND APPROVALS:

CM 24-02-25 Moved by Casey, seconded by Thomas; MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

To approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

- A. Approve Minutes of:
 February 5, 2024 - Regular Meeting
- B. Approval of Letter of Understanding between the City of Novi and the
 Command Officers Association of Michigan (COAM) for a one-time Cost-of-
 Living Adjustment (COLA) of 2% effective January 7, 2024.
- C. Approval and confirmation of goal language from January 6, 2024, Early Input
 Budget Session with updates provided from the February 5, 2024, Regular Council
 Meeting.
- D. Approval of claims and warrants – Warrant 1150

Roll call vote on CM 24-02-25

**Yeas: Gulumurthy, Heintz, Smith, Staudt,
 Thomas, Fischer, Casey
 Nays: None**

MATTERS FOR COUNCIL ACTION:

- 1. Consideration to approve variance relief from the depth-to-width ratio required in Chapter 38 of the City Code, Subdivision of Land, in order to allow a land division related to parcel 50-22-33-100-009, located at 47133 Nine Mile Road, that would result in two separate parcels, one of which would exceed the permitted ratio of the Code of Ordinances.**

City Manager Cardenas summarized that the Council is being requested to grant a variance from the Code of Ordinances that resulted in the denial of a lot-split by the City Assessor's office. He noted that the applicant requested to subdivide his parcel so he can prevent the demolition of his existing home by dividing his parcel into two parcels and building a new home on the newly created parcel. The applicant purchased the historical house back in 2010 with the intent to restore and preserve it. City Manager Cardenas told the Council that the applicant was present at the meeting and would stand by for any further questions if necessary from the Council.

Amar Abro, landowner of 47133 W. 9 Mile, told the Council that his land consists of five acres. He added that the home he lives in now was built in 1838 and is one of the oldest homes in Oakland County. He bought the home in 2010, and has put a ton of preservation work into the home to keep it from being demolished. Mr. Abro added that he has two options to move forward; to demolish the home, which would be heartbreaking to do with the historic value expressed by himself and his neighbors, or to split his lot into two lots, so he can build his new home on the new second lot. He acknowledged that the problem is that the lot does not meet the width to depth conformity ratios. He said the original lot with the old home on it is huge, with five acres. He said the new lot split would be on about four acres, with 300 feet of frontage on the road, and would not be a very narrow lot. He added that the new lot would not look odd to the neighborhood, it's just that the City has a three foot depth to width ratio.

Member Smith asked Mr. Abro what he is going to do with the existing home once he moves. Mr. Abro answered that ideally, he would love for his parents to move into the house. They live in Northville now and he would like them to be living next door so he can look after them.

Member Staudt asked Mr. Abro if he plans to leave the existing house for the long haul, even if his parents are no longer there, or if this scenario is going to be that he builds a new house and at some point, is going to sell the existing home. Mr. Abro said he has no intention of ever selling the house as long as he lives in the new home. He added that he would love to keep the five acres intact as a sort of ideal single property with a home. Mr. Abro said that if his parents don't end up living there, maybe it will become a guest home. He doesn't want to sell it, because he would like to keep the five acres for his family. He added that if you look at the aerial view of the five acres, it looks like one beautiful property. He put a lot of landscape work into making it sort of its own unique property in an area surrounded by mixed subdivisions. He said he would hate to tear it down, to sell it or to have somebody else take over that may want to tear it down one day. Mr. Abro said he could tell you everything about the house. It was built in 1838 by James Palmer, who was the justice of the peace at Novi. He said he has been to the Historical society many times to learn about the history there and bought the home to preserve it. He said that he wants to keep the old home up as long as it is financially viable to do so. Member Staudt said that he has seen these kinds of home around Novi over the years where somebody eventually moves out of it, and over time it turns into a nuisance and then it's torn down. Member Staudt said if wanted to build a new house, and tear down the old house and just have one big lot, he would understand that a little. However, he is a little perplexed as to why Mr. Abro wants to leave the old one up. Member Staudt said that the old house doesn't have something, unless there is a plan for long term preservation that is something Mr. Abro will invest in having a historical relic. Mr. Abro asked what he believed the intention was. Member Staudt responded that he believed the intention was to eventually tear down. Mr. Abro responded that the City Planner has already said they would allow him to build a new home before tearing down the old home but would not grant the certificate of occupancy in the new home until the original home was torn down. He said he is not looking for the original house to stay there while he builds a new home, because the City Planner already said that taking it

down is an option. He added that it is a beautiful home, and that he has put a lot of work with his own two hands into restoring the original home. He added that there is no reason to tear it down, it is not a tear down home.

Member Thomas asked if there was not a way to divide the property such that he can build the new house and doesn't need the approval from the Mr. Abro responded that the lot is 300 feet wide by 750 feet deep. The City rule is that a new lot with the old lot cannot be three feet deeper than it is wide. So, if he were to cut the property in half and say 150 feet, the lot cannot be greater than 450 feet deep. He said for that reason the lot he proposed to keep the old house on is confirming. However, it turns the new lot into a "L" shaped lot since it is 750 feet deep, the back half of which is heavily wooded, which he intends to remain heavily wooded.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey asked how far he was in the concept for what the new house is going to be, where he plans to put it on the lots, and all of that. Mr. Abro responded that he has met with an architect and a builder, and that they've been on site. He said it is one of two things; if he does not get the Council approval, then the old house has to be torn down and he'll put the new lot house in the middle of the property. He said if he did get the Council's permission, the new house would be just a little further in and then west of the historic home. He said his wife and himself have already met with an architect for the vision for the house and the designs. Mayor Pro Tem Casey asked how close to the Lincoln place he is planning to place the new home, is it 100 ft, 500 ft, and where he is in the process with that. Mr. Abro responded that where the house is now, approximately 180 ft further in, and then the house would have about 40 feet in distance from their closest points east to west. Mayor Pro Tem Casey asked if he has talked to his neighbors and if they are comfortable with it, because there are some neighbors that haven't experienced a house where he talked about putting it, because his lot is so wooded. Mr. Abro said yes, everyone he had talked to. He added that in 2008, the five acres were proposed to be split into a subdivision to six lots called the 'Rushmore'. He said the woman who had the property before him had the preapproval to do so, site plans, surveys done, and the neighbors hated the idea of having a subdivision in their back yard. Omar added that he has grown close to his neighbors who love seeing the historic farm in their backyard that is well taken care of. He said it is 182 years old and thought it would be a shame to see it go away. Mayor Pro Tem Casey responded that one of the things just looking at the sketch that it was hard to understand what his vision was for how he was going to place a new house on the split. She added that he has done a lot of due diligence and thanked him for that. Mayor Pro Tem Casey added that she appreciated that he is trying to maintain, even though it may or may not have historical marker to it, and that can be something he proceeds with getting depending on the true history, a historic building in Novi.

Mayor Fischer asked the City Manager and City Department Staff if there were any concerns from a public safety perspective of accessing a structure in the back, or any other kind of right of way considerations that the City has. City Manager Cardenas added that that would be taken into account when site plans and designs are presented. He said there are several other lots in the City that have that kind of long

driveway, that the public safety team has addressed. Charles Boulard, Community Development Director, said the maximum setback from the street is going to be the same whether there's two houses, or one. The rear setback and so on, will be the same. He said whether the house that is there is removed, a house could still be built at the back of the property, just as it could be on the new parcel that would be carved out. Mayor Fischer asked that if the split is approved, will all other setbacks and requirements under the zoning ordinance be required in the construction of the new home. Boulard said that unless the zoning board of appeals granted otherwise, yes that would be correct. Mayor Fischer clarified that if the five acres is split, the lots will be a little less than one acre and a little more than four acres. Boulard affirmed that statement is correct. Mayor Fischer said he doesn't see any reason why the council wouldn't go forward with this. He said he thinks that in order to preserve the and keep the old Lincoln place, as well as utilize the lot, it is large enough for two homes to be there without much detriment to the neighbors.

CM 24-02-26 Moved by Smith, seconded by Thomas: MOTION CARRIED: 6-1

Approval of variance relief from the depth-to-width ratio required in Chapter 38 of the City Code, Subdivision of Land, in order to allow a land division related to parcel 50-22-33-100-009, located at 47133 Nine Mile Road, that would result in two separate parcels, one of which would exceed the permitted 3 to 1 ratio, because the applicant has established a practical difficulty that would prohibit use of a significant portion of the parcel without destruction of a historic structure, because preservation of that structure is a benefit to the City and valuable public good, and because the relief does not impair the intent and purpose of the Subdivision of Land requirements as both parcels are of appropriate size and configuration for the area.

Roll call vote on CM 24-02-26

**Yeas: Heintz, Smith, Thomas, Fischer, Casey,
Gurumurthy**

Nays: Staudt

- 2. Consideration of approval to award the construction contract to T&M Asphalt Paving, Inc., the low bidder, for the Meadowbrook Commons and Wildlife Woods Pickleball and Parking Expansion project, in the amount of \$1,116,150.75 and amend the budget.**

City Manager Cardenas said that the timing of this project will be determined after a preconstruction meeting. He added that the intent is to start the projects in the Spring, but will all be dependent on weather, including the asphalt plant opening schedule and the contractor schedule. He said to also note that the Wildlife Woods Park will be closed during construction. Parks Recreation and Cultural services have blocked shelter rentals and are not scheduling any pickleball programs on the existing courts due to the scope of the construction work. As it relates to restroom facilities, over at Meadowbrook

Commons a pad to house a temporary restroom has been incorporated and if a need persists, a permanent restroom can be constructed at that site at a later date.

Member Staudt asked when the project will begin. City Manager Cardenas said that it will be when they meet with the contractor, if it is approved tonight, and determine the schedule there about weather, and when the asphalt plants open to pave. The hope is for Spring. Member Staudt asked how long the project is anticipated to last. City Manager Cardenas responded possibly two to three months. Member Staudt asked why the project won't be done at the end of the summer as opposed to doing it during the maximum use period. He noted that this project would shut down the only public pickleball courts in the City during May, June and July. Jeff Muck, Director of Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services, said they have wanted to get this project done as quickly as possible, and it has been a long time coming. He said there have been a lot of requests for pickleball courts, so the sooner we can get both projects done the faster they are back open. Member Staudt said that that is certainly one way of looking at it, but another way of looking at it is starting at the end of the season, and letting the people have their three or four months of summer and have construction from August through October. Jeff added that another intent is to get ahead on the contractor's schedules, with no risk of further delays as their schedules start booking up later into the summer and fall. Member Staudt asked when the pickleball courts at Meadowbrook Commons will get done. Director Muck said they have to meet with the contractor and find out if they want to do them consecutively or one after the other. Member Staudt said he is still questioning the idea of building one at Meadowbrook Commons so that when we move on to the next one there, it is open until Meadowbrook Commons is done and people can use it. Director Muck offered that if that is the Council's prerogative, that can be a conversation the city has with the contractor. Member Staudt states that the Council is the deciding body and tells the contractor when they are going to do the work, and that he would like to have a much clearer idea of shutting down a major park, and a major amenity in the city during prime season.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey echoed the comments from Member Staudt about separating out the timing. She understood the efficiency of wanting to get it all done at once, but the points about shutting down Wildlife Woods and eliminating the use of the pickleball courts during the summer were wise. She said that if there is a way to work with the contractor, do Meadowbrook Commons first, then come August or September, you can tackle Wildlife Woods Park.

Mayor Fischer added that it is in the best interest and the direction of where the Council is going to keep some of the pickleball courts open. He added that he has heard from residents at Meadowbrook Commons about people who would be at the pickleball courts utilizing their facilities and entering their building. He said he knows that it is already on the radar and hopes that it will continue to be. He said there is nice land there and we are making great use of it. That it is being partly funded by grant funding, so it is a great idea and concept in adding that amenity there. He said we should embrace that. On the flip side, also recognize that there are concerns, and that Director Muck is doing a good job of balancing both of those.

CM 24-02-27 Moved by Casey, seconded by Thomas: MOTION CARRIED: 7-0

Approval to award the construction contract to T&M Asphalt Paving, Inc., the low bidder, for the Meadowbrook Commons and Wildlife Woods Pickleball and Parking Expansion project, in the amount of \$1,116,150.75 and amend the budget.

Roll call vote on CM 24-02-27

Yeas: Smith, Staudt, Thomas, Fischer, Casey, Gurumurthy, Heintz

Nays: None

CONSENT AGENDA REMOVALS: None

AUDIENCE COMMENT: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

1. Older Adult Needs Committee

Mayor Pro Tem Casey said that the committee met at 5:30 pm that evening. The committee met to start formalizing what their recommendation will be for the Council. They are making good progress towards wrapping up their final proposal to Council and looking forward to what comes next for the Older Adult Needs committee going forward.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL ISSUES: None

ADJOURNMENT – There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:42 P.M.

Cortney Hanson, City Clerk

Justin Fischer, Mayor

Transcribed by Alyssa Craigie,
Administrative Assistant

Date approved: March 4, 2024