

Fairfax Town Council Minutes
Special Meeting
Wednesday, June 17, 2020
Via Teleconference due to COVID-19

Mayor Goddard called the Special Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Call to Order/Roll Call/Pledge of Allegiance:

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Bruce Ackerman
Barbara Coler
Renee Goddard
Stephanie Hellman
John Reed

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Garrett Toy, Town Manager
Michele Gardner, Town Clerk
Janet Coleson, Town Attorney
Chris Morin, Police Chief

Approval of Meeting Agenda and Affidavit of Posting

M/S, Coler/Ackerman, Motion to approve the Agenda and the Affidavit of Posting.
AYES: Ackerman, Coler, Hellman, Reed, Mayor Goddard
(Through a roll call vote)

Consent Calendar

1. Receive Report on the formation and purpose of a Racial Equity Committee to be agendized for the Council's July 1st meeting- Town Manager

M/S, Hellman/Ackerman, Motion to pull the Consent Calendar item for discussion.
AYES: Ackerman, Coler, Hellman, Reed, Mayor Goddard
(Through a roll call vote)

Regular Agenda

1. Receive Report on the formation and purpose of a Racial Equity Committee to be agendized for the Council's July 1st meeting- Town Manager

Councilmember Hellman stated she wants the Committee to be comprised of a diverse set of community members from a background perspective.

Councilmember Coler stated she would support a "listening session" as suggested by the Mayor: with all the Councilmembers present with the purpose of developing the key trends and focus for the Committee. She liked the suggestion by Councilmember Hellman to name it the Racial Equity and Social Justice Committee.

Mayor Goddard opened the meeting to public comments.

Mr. Richard Applebaum liked the idea of a listening session and would like some clarity on the actions that the Committee would take including policy changes, education, keep a discussion

going on, creating awareness and sensitivity.

Ms. Maia Sinaiko had concerns about Fairfax policies with respect to racial equity and inclusion. She discussed affordable housing and NIMBYism.

Ms. Maria Querry, Cascade Drive, asked the Council to wait to approve the Budget until the Committee is formed so they could discuss how to use the funds allocated for the Police Department.

Natasha is concerned with the amount of policing in Town given the low crime rates. Police handling non-crime issues is not necessary and could lead to more conflict.

Ms. Kimia Mahalati stated the Committee and the Budget are inherently intertwined, and the Police Department budget should be decreased.

Ms. Amal Jamal asked how they make people feel safe right this minute with the severe backlash going on.

Michaela suggested reallocating the Police Department Budget to equal opportunity housing, education, mental health services, and childcare.

An individual who lives in the Cascades is horrified that 38% of the Town Budget goes to the Police Department. The funds should be directed to services that uplift and empower the community.

Ms. Pat Johnston, representing Sanctuary Marin, supported delaying the Budget process. She agreed with previous comments about reallocating police funding.

Ms. Veronica Geretz stated they it was necessary to understand how to make the community inviting and affordable for people of color. She supports the creation of the committee.

Ms. Julia Ledyard stated her guitar teacher, who is a black female, was too afraid to come to her house because of the Fairfax Police and citizens. She supported the creation of the committee.

Mr. Chance Cutrano supported the creation of the committee. Becoming more diverse and inclusive needed a multi-pronged approach.

Reverend Marissa Dani supported establishing an anti-racist committee and budget and supported the formation of a committee. She urged the Council to reject the Budget and rethink the Police Department.

Ms. Megan McCullough urged the Council to defund the Police Department and reallocate those resources to support community members in need. Adoption of the budget should be postponed.

Elizabeth P. discussed rethinking the Police Budget and more aspirational goals. There is an intersection between racial justice and environmental justice.

An individual stated Marin County seemed like a safe place to grow up. She wondered what would happen if they defunded the Police Department.

Aurora urged the Council to reject the proposed Budget and supported the creation of the committee.

Mayor Goddard closed the meeting to public comments.

It was the consensus of the Council to hold a Special Meeting to discuss this item.

Public Hearing

2. Discuss/consider Fiscal Year 2020/21 Proposed Operating and Capital Improvement Budget- Town Manager, Finance Director (Continued from June 3, 2020 Council meeting)

Town Council Toy presented the staff report. He stated this is a baseline budget that will be reviewed by the Council mid-year. He answered questions from the Council.

Police Chief Morin presented a report about how he runs the Police Department. He answered questions from the Council regarding overtime expenses and staffing.

Finance Director Vivrette answered questions from the Council.

Councilmember Ackerman briefly discussed the Climate Action Committee's (CAC) proposed projects and budget requests.

The Council took a 5-minute break at 8:25 p.m.

Mayor Goddard opened the Public Hearing.

Ms. Mimi Newton stated she is speaking as a Fairfax resident and not as a Planning Commissioner. She experienced a serious, violent, racially charged interaction and found the Fairfax Police Department to be an exemplary group. She recommended the Council adopt the budget and perform a mid-year holistic review of the entire budget.

Laura stated Fairfax, and all of Marin County, has an issue with white supremacy which relates to policies and budgets.

Mr. Jesse Hoffman stated he has concerns about defunding the Police Department. They are doing a great job.

Mr. Richard Applebaum stated the budget shortfall could end up being worse since the impacts of COVID-19 are not fully understood. They should be conservative on spending and analyze the allocation of resources.

Ronnie acknowledged the role of the Police Department and agreed that this issue is about resource allocation. He urged the Council to delay the budget process.

Mr. Mark Squire, "Good Earthling", stated health professionals should be responding to many of the calls that go to the Police Department. The proposed committee should include the Hispanic community.

Ms. Naomi Schultz, representing Re-Think Police Fairfax, opposed the budget. Police Budgets should be reduced, and those funds should be reallocated to organizations better-equipped at handling the vast majority of public safety needs.

Natasha's husband stated they should be focusing on financial uncertainties due to COVID-19, raises carried over from year to year, and reducing Police staffing.

Ms. Jackie Bloom asked the Council to not approve the budget, as the 38.6% allocation to the

Police Department is no longer acceptable. Funds should be redirected to community-based resources.

Mr. Franks urged the Council not to approve the proposed budget. They should not put the burden of solving society's problems on the Police Department.

Mr. Walt Vernon discussed the CAC's five priorities.

Ms. Debra Benson stated it was not always a good option to have a social worker address issues currently addressed by the police. Two Police officers are needed per shift. She asked the Council to think about reducing salaries by 10%.

Mr. Joe McGarry stated the way Police Departments are currently operated plays a role in the institutional racism that exists in this country.

Maya Sinaiko stated the budget should not be passed and it required more discussion.

Mr. Ryland Morgan stated the budget should not be passed and it required more discussion.

Mr. Jessie Lum stated he did not understand why one-third of the Budget goes to the Police Department. He urged the Council to reject the budget.

Elizabeth P. stated things have to be TBD in this Town because they do not have enough money. They can do more with less and focus the priorities on what is important to this Town.

Mr. Chance Cutrano, speaking on behalf of Re-Imagine Fairfax Public Safety, stated the pandemic, climate change, and this watershed moment should give them cause for pause. Communities are reassessing the role of Police Departments. He recommends not moving forward on the budget.

Ms. Sandy Handsher stated the Fairfax Police Department has policies and procedures to protect immigration rights. She asked if it was necessary to have two Police officers on duty.

Ms. Veronica Geretz asked if they could re-imagine Public Safety so all individuals feel safe in the community. She asked the Council to delay adoption of the budget.

Kobe stated the Police budget was excessive, and suggested a volunteer Police force.

Mayor Goddard closed the Public Hearing.

Councilmember Coler stated she would like further discussion on the part-time Neighborhood Response Group (NRG) Coordinator position, downtown sidewalks, and the Women's Club ADA improvements.

Councilmember Hellman stated she supports a Citizen's Committee on Police practices and public safety. There should be more than one Listening Session and a survey.

Councilmember Ackerman asked what it would mean if they pushed the "pause" button on the budget. They should work out the details, move forward, and perform a mid-year budget review. He was concerned about the CAC projects.

Councilmember Reed stated the Council will review the budget soon but it was necessary to move forward with the Town's business. He supports allocating \$25,000 to the CAC for the Pavilion work, doing the ADA improvements at the Women's Club, continuing with the trail

improvements, and funding the NRG Coordinator position.

Mayor Goddard supported a “pause” and felt they need to creatively work through the priorities.

The Council took a 5-minute break at 10:45 p.m.

Regular Agenda

3. Discuss/consider the further use of public spaces (e.g., parking lots) for temporary outdoor businesses uses and provide direction to staff- Town Manager

Town Manager Toy presented the staff report. He answered questions from the Council.

Mr. John Bela discussed his design, the urgent issues facing the Town, and the unique character of the downtown. He discussed the proposal and how to reopen businesses safely. He answered questions from the Council.

Councilmember Coler liked the concept of “shoplets” rather than “parklets” but was worried about how to control the areas (cleaning, maneuverability, etc.). She asked about serving alcohol in these outdoor areas. She would like to get rid of the portapotty in the right-of-way near the Way Station and replace it with bike parking.

Councilmember Hellman liked the idea of a cycle track and had questions about the barrier and the parking and loading zones on Broadway. She supports the idea of incremental bike parking.

Councilmember Ackerman loved the idea and had questions about bike parking and the possible use of Peri Park for outdoor dining.

Councilmember Reed liked the way the temporary bike lanes are being used to provide buffer zones. This is a great concept.

Mayor Goddard opened the meeting to public comments.

Ms. Debra Benson stated people want parking. Bicyclists do not go into the downtown stores and restaurants. Bolinas Road is an evacuation route and should not be changed.

Mr. Richard Applebaum stated the map focuses on Bolinas Road and Broadway and not the other commercial areas. He suggested a more “agile” approach.

Ms. Mallory Geitheim agreed with the comments made by Ms. Benson. She asked that the more important topics be placed at the beginning of the agenda.

Town Clerk Gardner read an email from Laura and Will Simpkins supporting the use of public spaces for temporary outdoor business.

Town Clerk Gardner read an email from Ms. Norma Fragoso supporting the outdoor temporary Conditional Use Permit idea and recommending moving the bike stand in front of the Roastery to the vacant easement by the Way Station.

Town Clerk Gardner read an email from Mr. Rick Hamer expressing concern about the increase in COVID-19 cases and urged everyone to wear a mask while using these outdoor areas.

Ms. Danielle Moreno stated it is inappropriate to call the issue of Black Lives Matter “sexy”.

Mr. Chance Cutrano stated he is a big fan of the spread-out spaces. The hours of operation on Mono should be extended on the weekends (12:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.).

Mayor Goddard closed the meeting to public comments.

It was the consensus of the Council to allow the following: The Coffee Roastery loading zone on Bolinas Road to be used for outdoor seating and move the loading zone to the middle of Bank Street; closing off the lower half of the Mono lot to allow for outdoor seating and alcohol Thursday through Sunday nights, installing signs indicating the space is to be used by patrons of the local businesses, and paying the Chamber of Commerce to clean and maintain the area; allow for the width of traffic lanes on Bolinas Road as depicted in the drawings and use some paint to delineate area for tables vs. pedestrian lanes; holding off on incorporating the bike lanes on Broadway per the drawings.

M/S, Reed/Ackerman, Motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:08 a.m.
AYES: Ackerman, Coler, Hellman, Reed, Mayor Goddard

Respectfully submitted,

Toni DeFrancis
Recording Secretary