



Minutes

Lakewood City Council

Adjourned Regular Meeting held
June 2, 2020

MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER at 6:03 p.m. by Mayor Rogers in the Weingart Ballroom at the Civic Center, 5000 Clark Avenue, Lakewood, California.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Mayor Todd Rogers
Vice Mayor Jeff Wood
Council Member Steve Croft
Council Member Diane DuBois (via teleconference)
Council Member Ariel Pe

Mayor Rogers announced that the meeting would be adjourned in memory of George Floyd of Minneapolis. He asserted that Mr. Floyd's death and the events which followed had impacts on the community, the region, as well as throughout the country. He conveyed the City Council's pride in representing the entire community regardless of political ideology and supported the ability of people to express outrage and to exercise their first amendment rights. However, he objected to the behaviors of some opportunists who caused damage and destruction, actions which benefitted only themselves such as stealing from businesses and attacking police officers with no nexus to what happened to Mr. Floyd. He spoke of the Las Vegas police officer who was in grave condition after an attempt on his life during a protest. The Mayor related the incidents which occurred in Lakewood as deliberate and malicious attacks by criminals who were not expressing outrage about Mr. Floyd but were attempting to loot and steal from local businesses. He commended law enforcement and staff for their efforts in protecting and preserving the community. He assured that in light of the incidents that occurred in Minneapolis and other places around the country, there was a need for in depth and honest conversations to address what may have precipitated such actions. He reported that during his time in law enforcement, he had specialized in community based policing, which he described as being about strengthening partnership, problem solving and working to identify issues in the community and developing solutions to common issues collaboratively. Mayor Rogers reiterated that a Council Member's job was not to govern but to serve and represent the residents of Lakewood. He proposed the formation of a clergy council, a multi denominational group of pastors working in partnership with the City to create a process of dialogue to identify common problems, to prioritize those which needed to be dealt with initially and most importantly, to provide mutually agreed upon solutions. He stated the importance of having representation from the faith community, residents, the City Council and the Sheriff's Department to provide varying perspectives. He maintained that with concurrence of his Council colleagues, the City should move forward with taking immediate steps to begin the process.

Council Member Croft reported on the record number of new COVID-19 cases and related deaths in Los Angeles County. He stated that in the same way that residents in the community had stepped up to take care of each other during the pandemic, they had acted similarly in the last few days. He highlighted the group of residents, which included the Vice Mayor and his wife, who came out the morning following the looting to clean up the areas of the businesses which had been targeted. He spoke against the criminal element who took away the focus of the righteous anger and indignation at Mr. Floyd's death. He expressed support of the Mayor's plan and added that the local religious leaders were a great resource.

Council Member Pe echoed his support noting the importance of maintaining open lines of communication with residents and the community.

Council Member DuBois concurred by stating that reaching out to local clergy was valuable and should be ongoing with other issues as well.

Vice Mayor Wood expressed sympathy for George Floyd's family and noted the tragic nature of the situation. He stated that protests allowed communities to come together, when lawful, and cited that it provided an opportunity to exercise a constitutional right. He thanked the Chamber of Commerce for organizing business owners, community leaders and residents to come together to help in the clean-up effort. He voiced his support and agreed that the local clergy could provide guidance and such a gathering in the community could enable some meaningful conversations.

Council Member DuBois stated her gratitude for the presence and assistance of Sky Knight during the unrest.

Mayor Rogers expressed appreciation to the LA. County Sheriff's Department deputies for their commitment and dedication to the Lakewood community. He thanked his colleagues for their support and noted that he looked forward to moving ahead with the clergy council.

City Manager Thaddeus McCormack noted the efforts of Public Safety and Public Works staff for their assistance in boarding up buildings and keeping the City safe.

PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF OPERATING BUDGET FOR FY 2020-2021 AND 2021-2022

The City Manager displayed slides and introduced the two-year budget and detailed the budget process calendar. He specified Lakewood's budget principles of prudent fiscal management, strong fiscal oversight, and living within its means. He outlined that historically, the budget strategy had been to provide City services at a level consistent with available resources keeping spending on an annual operation well below revenue; to generate a surplus each year to be used for capital improvements; and utilize save-then-spend capital financing strategy, as opposed to debt financing. He explained the fiscal environment in recent years noting constrained resources and the increased cost of doing business.

PRELIMINARY FY 2020-2021 AND 2021-2022 BUDGET REVIEW - Continued

Mr. McCormack added that in the current year, the COVID-19 pandemic had triggered an economic downturn; however, the passage of Measure L would bring a new revenue source and provide stability. He stated that Measure L would allow for the City to maintain core services and programs; address infrastructure needs; and focus on a long-term perspective.

Jose Gomez, Director of Finance and Administrative Services, continued the slide presentation and provided an overview of the General Fund Budget and the Financial Outlook. He described Lakewood as a financial outlier in that the COVID-19 revenue impacts were not as significant as they were for other cities; the passage of Measure L; and that the contract city model provided some flexibility.

In response to Council Member Croft's inquiry, Mr. Gomez stated that while the tax measure would go into effect on July 1st, the City would start receiving fund advances into September and would likely balance out with the December payment from the State.

Council Member Croft explained that with regard to the projected \$4 million deficit for the current year, the previously adopted budget that was balanced had assumed a revenue and expenditure profile that did not include the impacts of the COVID-19 shut downs and revenue losses. He added that thanks to the current and previous City Councils for being fiscally prudent that rainy day funds had been built up.

Director of Public Safety, Joshua Yordt, identified some of the upgrades and enhancements in the proposed budget, which included a new position of Public Safety Program Coordinator; reclassification of Administrative Assistant II to Public Safety Manager and Community Safety Specialist to Public Safety Supervisor. He further listed the addition of two part-time Community Safety Officer positions as well as a new Public Safety hybrid vehicles utilizing Air Quality Management District funds.

Mr. McCormack clarified that the proposed new position would be tentatively held as a funded item on the budget, however, it would be brought to the Public Safety Committee for consideration prior to final approval.

Vice Mayor Wood stated that having recently been appointed to the Public Safety Committee, it would be helpful to have an organizational chart showing the various proposed positions.

Mayor Rogers noted the value of smart, recognizable vehicles citing the recent unrest as an example of such a need.

Mr. McCormack reported that another of the proposed changes to the budget included the Sky Knight helicopter program and the partnership with the City of Cerritos. He explained that a suggestion that had developed at a recent Lakewood Public Safety Committee meeting was to meet with its Cerritos public safety counterpart to discuss the possibility of Lakewood's covering the Cerritos portion of the extraordinary maintenance costs as a way of reducing Cerritos' total share and allowing them to continue on with the program.

PRELIMINARY FY 2020-2021 AND 2021-2022 BUDGET REVIEW - Continued

Mayor Rogers stated that the availability of the helicopters during the recent events demonstrated their importance as a public safety resource. Noting that the \$133,000 Cerritos portion in extraordinary maintenance costs was a significant amount, he cautioned that some type of long term commitment be obtained from Cerritos.

Vice Mayor Wood commented that after viewing the Cerritos City Council meeting during their deliberation of the matter, it appeared that they were placing the burden of the full cost of the Sky Knight program on Lakewood. He noted that neighboring cities often benefited from the services of Sky Knight without sharing in the costs and that such considerations should be factored in any decision moving forward.

Responding to Council Member Pe's question, Mayor Rogers indicated that the City of Cerritos should provide a minimum commitment of at least two years to coincide with the duration of Lakewood's two-year budget.

Council Member Croft cited that during the recent incidents of unrest, without Sky Knight, there would not have been any air service available for the area. He expressed understanding of the difficult position that Cerritos was in with the unsuccessful passage of their tax measure; however, the costs of the program would have to be paid to keep the program going. He stated his support for engaging Cerritos' public safety representatives as well as other neighboring cities' participation to discuss options.

Vice Mayor Wood concurred that the program should be marketed to the other cities and inquired whether statistics might be provided on the number of flight hours Sky Knight had dedicated over Cerritos.

Mayor Rogers further noted that the potential on the loss of the Sky Knight program at this time might preclude ever getting it back due to the cost prohibitive nature of acquiring helicopters and their associated maintenance expenses.

Mr. McCormack responded to Council Member DuBois' question by stating that the costs for Sky Knight's recent flights over other cities, such as Bellflower and Paramount, were not shared among those cities but rather were available through a mutual aid arrangement.

In response to Mayor Rogers' inquiry, Mr. Yordt confirmed that Bellflower did receive mutual aid assistance on Sunday night.

Council Member Pe commented that as a business owner in the City, and noting the looting occurring throughout the area, he felt reassured to hear the Sky Knight helicopters flying overhead when he visited his shop late on Sunday evening during the unrest. He added that having grown up in Lakewood, the familiar sound of the helicopter provided him with a sense of safety.

Mayor Rogers concurred by stating that it was no coincidence that two of the lowest per capita crime rate cities in the region were Lakewood and Cerritos, both patrolled by Sky Knight.

PRELIMINARY FY 2020-2021 AND 2021-2022 BUDGET REVIEW - Continued

Vice Mayor Wood suggested that a compelling argument could be made that some of the nearby cities had newly seated council members who were not in office at the time the program had been cut from their respective cities but could be approached about renewed participation in the Sky Knight program.

Council Member DuBois concurred and reiterated that the other neighboring cities should be reminded of the value they received from Sky Knight adding that outreach could be made through interagency committees that other cities' council members were involved with.

Mr. Gomez continued the presentation by citing noteworthy expenditure adjustments, which included adjustments in Capital Improvement Program set aside; Sheriff's Department contract and liability insurance; salary and benefit adjustments; Joint Powers Insurance Authority liability insurance; refuse contract; CalPERS rates; CalPERS unfunded liability, shifting in labor allocations within departments and City programs and services, which remained fluid in compliance with COVID-19 guidelines.

Noting the coronavirus-related changes made in the various work environments, such as the placement of Plexiglas at appropriate locations and alternating work schedules to reduce numbers in workspaces, Vice Mayor Wood inquired whether consideration had been given to continuing some of the practices or making adjustments to work practice and processes after the pandemic.

Mr. Gomez shared that staff had been working closely with the IT division in an effort to minimize physical contact with materials and to allow for more electronic, rather than paper-based transactions. Mr. McCormack concurred by stating that the circumstances resulting from the pandemic presented opportunities to seek ways of working more efficiently and the work-from-home option presented many possibilities as well as challenges. He added that there would definitely be a hot wash analysis to consider the alternatives that were worth continuing into the future.

The City Manager outlined the proposal for multiple fireworks shows to be held on July 3rd. The event would take place in lieu of an annual block party event and would utilize Artesia High School, Lakewood High School and Holmes Middle School as launch sites at an estimated cost of \$65,000, which was not in the proposed budget.

Council Member DuBois stated that while there was justification for a fireworks show, there was also an opportunity for cost savings.

Council Member Pe and Council Member Croft expressed support for a fireworks show as an event that would allow the community to celebrate in a safe, socially distanced way.

Vice Mayor Wood suggested a tie in with restaurants, who could provide special deals such as family packs, to allow for residents to support local eateries while viewing the fireworks from their yards or in their neighborhoods.

PRELIMINARY FY 2020-2021 AND 2021-2022 BUDGET REVIEW - Continued

Mayor Rogers supported the opportunity for a communal event in the City and maintained that any other synergistic ideas, such as Vice Mayor Wood's suggestion, were welcomed and should be explored. He noted that it would be a fiscally good decision since there would be less money spent on the fireworks shows than would have been expended on the block party event.

Council Member Croft explained that residents who could not view the display from their homes would not have to drive too much of a distance since there were multiple launch sites.

Responding to Vice Mayor Wood's question regarding potential sponsorships to offset the costs, Mr. McCormack stated that such opportunities could be pursued.

Mr. McCormack confirmed for Mayor Rogers that with consensus from the City Council, the intent was to take the item to the Community Promotions Committee to flesh out the details.

Council Member Croft asserted that with many of the usual sponsors having been hit financially, the City would need to be prepared to spend the entire amount of \$65,000.

Mr. Gomez highlighted some of the noteworthy revenue items such as sales tax, property tax, utility users tax, gas tax, building permits, parking citations and transient occupancy tax. He detailed the water utility fund budget and described some of the noteworthy water budget items. He summarized the budget by noting that the City was well positioned financially; Lakewood benefitted as a financial outlier; maintained City programs and services; augmented public safety resources; set-aside funds for future infrastructure improvements; and would restart a twenty year plan in fiscal year 2021-22. He indicated that the next step was to present the budget at the June 9th meeting for consideration and adoption.

Council Member Croft clarified that the funds identified as surplus were actually monies that were used to build reserves in order to pay for capital projects, as needed, a philosophy which was consistent with the City's long term strategies.

The Council Members acknowledged and expressed gratitude to staff for their efforts in preparing such a comprehensive report.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to be brought before the City Council, Mayor Rogers adjourned the meeting at 8:11 p.m. to Tuesday, June, 9, 2020, at 6:00 p.m. in the Weingart Ballroom. A moment of silence was observed in memory of George Floyd.

Respectfully submitted,

Jo Mayberry, CMC
City Clerk