



**CITY OF NOVI CITY COUNCIL  
DECEMBER 18, 2023**

**SUBJECT:** Appointments to Boards and Commissions

**SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT:** City Clerk

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** Presentations for Boards and Commissions candidates interested in appointment to the Board of Review or Zoning Board of Appeals were held Monday, December 11th. Attached is the ballot for appointments to Boards and Commissions, Council interview memo, presentation draft minutes, candidates' applications, and current Booklet List.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:** Appointments to Boards and Commissions

# MEMORANDUM



**TO:** MAYOR FISCHER AND COUNCIL MEMBERS  
**CC:** CORTNEY HANSON, CITY CLERK  
**FROM:** MELISSA MORRIS, DEPUTY CITY CLERK  
**SUBJECT:** PRESENTATIONS FOR BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS  
**DATE:** DECEMBER 7, 2023

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Attached please find applications for the current openings on Boards and Commissions along with a ratings sheet and current Boards & Commissions Booklet List. Due to the volume of applicants for Boards and Commissions as well as the open City Council position, only Board of Review and Zoning Board of Appeals applicants will be interviewed at the December 11, 2023 meeting. The remaining presentations will take place at the next meeting on December 18, 2023.

W. Cliff Montague is unable to attend the interviews.

In accordance with Council Rules amended in February 2021, all boards and commission candidates will present to City Council. Please see below the current openings for which candidates are presenting.

<b>Board or Commission</b>	<b>Number of openings</b>	<b>Term expiration</b>
Board of Review	1 full term	01/01/2027
Zoning Board of Appeals	3 full terms, 1 alternate	01/01/2027

**Attendance records for those seeking reappointment:**

Margaret Beller (BOR) – attended 19 of 20 (95%) meetings since January 2021.  
W. Cliff Montague (ZBA) - attended 32 of 35 (91%) meetings since January 2021.  
Joe Peddiboyina (ZBA) - attended 30 of 35 (86%) meetings since January 2021.  
Michael Thompson (ZBA) – attended 26 of 35 (74%) meetings since January 2021.

**BALLOT**  
**APPOINTMENTS BY CITY COUNCIL**  
**December 18, 2023**

\* Minimum 4 votes required for appointment to Board or Commission

**Board of Review**  
1 full term  
Term expires 01/01/2027

- Margaret Beller *\*reappointment*
- Joseph Samona
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

\*Applicant Lori Burke withdrew her name for consideration for Board of Review.

**Zoning Board of Appeals**  
3 full terms, 1 alternate  
Terms Expire 01/01/2027

- Michael Thompson *\*reappointment*  
 full term  alternate
- W, Clift Montague *\*reappointment*  
 full term  alternate
- Joe Peddiboyina *\* reappointment*  
 full term  alternate
- Larry Butler  
 full term  alternate
- \_\_\_\_\_  
 full term  alternate
- \_\_\_\_\_  
 full term  alternate

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Council Member Signature**

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NOVI  
MONDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2023 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 Heintz, Smith, Staudt, Thomas

**ALSO PRESENT:** Victor Cardenas, City Manager  
Danielle Mahoney, Assistant City Manager  
Thomas Schultz, City Attorney

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Mayor Fischer moved Michael Lynch to the first interview under City Council Interviews. He explained that he had another commitment that evening. He noted this will give him a disadvantage of being the only person who does not hear the questions.

**CM 23-12-149 Moved by Casey, seconded by Staudt; MOTION CARRIED: 6-0**

**To approve the Agenda as amended.**

**Roll call vote on CM 23-12-149**                      **Yeas: Casey, Heintz, Smith, Staudt, Thomas, Fischer**  
**Nays: None**

**PUBLIC HEARINGS: None**

**BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS INTERVIEWS**

**1. Margaret Beller - Board of Review**

Margaret Beller said she was there that evening to be sworn onto the Board of Review. She said she was appointed to the Board of Review during COVID and she was never sworn in. She said she has been doing it for three years. Initially she lived at the South end of Novi on Gallway for 25 years. She said she and her husband moved to the North end on South Lake Drive. She felt she was qualified because she has lived in two different places in Novi and she has enjoyed her time on the Board of Review and she would like to continue that work.

**2. Lori Burke - Board of Review**

Lori Burke said she has lived in Novi for 30 years said she was applying for the Board of Review, or quite honestly wherever you thought her services would be a best fit. She said she have over 45 years in the financial services industry, so she was well qualified as far as that. She said she would love to serve the community. She mentioned you well know that her husband was on City Council and other various Boards and Commissions, so he

is well versed with what is going on and how everything works. She wanted to carry that on. She said she was retired now and wanted to give back to the City.

### **3. Larry Butler - Zoning Board of Appeals**

### **4. Joe Peddiboyina - Zoning Board of Appeals**

Joe Peddiboyina congratulated the newly elected and the Mayor. He said he lived in Novi for over 22 years. He noted he has been enjoying the Board of Appeals and working with the team, this is what he would like to do for the City of Novi, to volunteer more and more. He mentioned he also volunteers in his Indian community, would like to continue volunteering for the City.

### **5. Joseph Samona - Board of Review**

Joe Samona stated he has been working as a realtor since 2012, following in the footsteps of his dad, who was a licensed real estate agent for over 30 years, with almost 20 of those years being a licensed real estate broker. Unfortunately, he passed away in June of 2023, but his legacy and passion for real estate continued to inspire him. He has been a resident of Novi since 2003 and he lived with his mother. Over the years, he developed a deep love for the community and a strong desire to see it thrive and grow. He said one thing he wanted to highlight is his understanding, which is imperative for the Borad of Review, of the importance of the difference between the state equalized value, a taxable value, and the app and the implications when they become uncapped. This knowledge and other knowledge allowed him to provide valuable insight and guidance to his clients and to the community, which can assist him here with almost 150 transactions and \$50 million in sales volume, a significant portion of which has been achieved since 2020. He took great pride in being strategic and being able to help his clients and the community. He believed in fostering honest and transparent relationships, built on integrity and success outside of work. He enjoyed spending quality time with his family and friends exploring new places and exploring eateries within the City. He firmly believed that his honesty, integrity, and the strong foundation he built for his real estate business would be valuable and would be an asset to the Borad of Review. He was confident in his ability to contribute positively to the decision-making process and worked as a team member to help shape the future of our community. Thank you very much for your time.

### **6. Michael Thompson - Zoning Board of Appeals**

Michael Thompson stated he was currently on the Zoning Board of Appeals and has been on the Zoning Board of Appeals for three years now. He mentioned he has been a resident of Novi for 18 years, he has three children in Novi Schools, two at the high school, one at the middle school. Go Wildcats. He said he has had fun the last three years on the Board. He felt that the Board led by Joe had given compassion to the residents, to the and then professionalism to the small business owners, large business owners, all the businesses in Novi. He stated the sign variances and some of the setbacks, he has learned

a lot over the last three years. He thought they have made some good decisions for both the City and the landowners that are trying to make small changes within it. He thought the Board was run professionally and he would like to be a part of it for another two years.

Mayor Fischer reminded everyone that we will not be making decisions that evening on Boards and Commissions. We will make those appointments at our next scheduled meeting on December 18, 2023.

Mayor Fischer announced that we will move on the City Council Interviews which was like what we just saw from a process perspective, we are going to start with a two-minute introduction from the candidates. He reminded everyone that they do have the comprehensive packet and application that everyone filled out for the City Council for the open city council position. He said feel free to use the full two minutes, but it is not necessary either. After each introduction, the City Council will then have a question-and-answer time session. He stated each Councilmember will be afforded two questions each. He explained we will go in a round robin fashion up here, not every Councilmember is obliged to use both questions. He said in the interest of respecting everybody's time if your question is like other or if you feel it has already been answered feel free to pass on either round of questioning. He stated like the Boards and Commissions, we also will not be deciding on the City Council appointment that evening. He said that agenda item will be up for discussion and vote at our next meeting on December 18, 2023. He asked City Manager Cardenas if he had anything he wanted to add to that. Mr. Cardenas said no. He said with that we will go ahead and start with Mr. Lynch; you have two minutes.

## **CITY COUNCIL INTERVIEWS**

### **1. Michael Lynch**

Michael Lynch said hello and thanked everyone for volunteering. He knew it was thankless at times, but it is important. He said he has lived in the City for 21 years, 18 of those years he has been on the Planning Commission. He also wanted to mention that his bride of 45 years was in the audience. They raised two little girls who have become very successful, strong women, and more importantly, great moms. We have five grandkids that are hilarious and make them laugh every single day. He stated 18 years ago he stood right there in this very spot and answered the mayor's request for help. He just finished settled several judgements where apparently, his understanding is the City violated some property rights. He said the newly elected Council were trying to get their footing. He said at that interview he promised he would do two things, he promised that he would make decisions that were both legal and would provide a framework for a win-win outcome. He made that same promise that evening. He said he would do the best to answer all your questions. He requested that you judge him based on his past performance and the content of his character, which has been on full public display for the last 18 years.

Mayor Fischer said he would start the questioning. He started to his left with Member Staudt.

Member Staudt said Mr. Lynch, you have had an unprecedented long term on the Planning Commission. He wondered if he could provide them with the best perspective of what has occurred during the last 18 years. He stated he has only been here 16 of them, what do you see as we move forward in the future. He asked what the biggest challenge that the City is going to face is relative to development. Mr. Lynch said he hoped he would not get gasps in this room like he did the first night when he said he thought Beck Road needed to be widened to five lanes, he said the gasps were deafening. He stated that right now you have got the growth going to the west. He said Novi has been through its birth and then rapid steady growth. He said suddenly, we went to rapid growth, and we are nearing, or we are getting close to what he would consider a build out phase to the west of us. He stated if you look out there, it used to be a little snowball, which was South Lyon, Brighton, and Green Oak Township. He said he was talking about traffic and how we manage traffic right now, he said to be quite honest with you, it is our biggest problem we need to think about. He thought that in a couple years, the traffic problems right now will go away because I-96, MDOT is going to get done with their things. He thought that we needed to, he had some ideas, to manage the future growth which he thought was coming, because it affects our city. He said that is number one on his mind.

Member Smith stated that in your application he noticed that you mentioned something about the Novi brand. He asked if he could give him an example of that and how a policy that you would implement to develop the Novi brand. Mr. Lynch said first, he wanted to tell you what he thought the Novi brand and how he based his decisions on the City Council around, the Planning Commission at the top of this pyramid is safety. He said it is more than just police and fire, you know it is the infrastructure, which is the water and sewer, and the roads. Then you have on one side family friendly. He said that means that it has great schools, you have a school fail, you have a bad school, you will see less people trying to move into your city and then of course, access to quality recreations and parks. He said on the other side, he saw diversity, which Novi is good at, they are welcoming in his opinion, of all cultures, and inclusive, which means that everyone has a chance, which you can see here that evening. He mentioned they have a chance at governance, planning, and budgeting. He said that is his idea, the Novi brand. He said he forgot the question. Member Smith said that was the first part of his questions, the second question was how we implement that. Mr. Lynch said he though you are doing a pretty good job right now. He said from the Council standpoint, Planning Commission is a little bit different, but from the Council standpoint, you are faced with a million different wants for, for money in a whole bunch of different projects. E said in his professional life he has tried to do things, on Planning Commission, was to keep it simple. He said if it improves those three items, we fund it. If it doesn't, we do not fund it, simple as that. He thought that you are never going to please everybody, that is the problem. He felt that if you try to do everything for everybody, you are going to get so diluted, you will do nothing for Novi.

Member Heintz stated he was a vegetarian, but he recognized that he cannot say no more restaurants that serve meat. He was curious from Mr. Lynch's perspective, from whether it be your time on the Planning Commission or just in general, can you think of a specific example of how you can demonstrate that you can focus on the residents as a whole and what all the residents in Novi would be interested in. Mr. Lynch gave an example that we were faced with, an expansion of the Island Lake community. He said the people were worried about traffic and the destruction of the wildlife or the trees and all that stuff. He said the residents all came in and it was nice because you get to hear them, but if you listened closely, it was not about the traffic, it was not about the trees they were going to cut. The big problem was the developer had a pool that was developed for, he did not know for sure, around 850 original units, and they were afraid that with the additional 150 units, they would not have access to the pool. He said they wanted the developer to put in another bigger pool. He said his thoughts were, how about if we put more concrete around the existing pool so everybody has a chance to be at the pool. He said if you looked at the pool, hardly anybody was in it. He said everybody was sitting around it, so why don't we just add some more concrete. He told the residents to think about it, if they put those two subdivisions in, they are going to use the amenities that you are paying for. He said it wouldn't it be better to have dues paying them, a part of your association that is paying for those amenities to increase the revenue. He said if you increase the size of the decking, he thought that everybody would be happy. Fortunately, it worked out, and that was because of just listening to people. He said they came in hot, and they are upset if you cut through the emotion and just listen closely, he thought it is one of the cases where you can find a win-win outcome. He said we could talk about the Adell property, but he did not think that every good decision has a great outcome. He said that is one that haunts him to this day. He also mentioned a Denny's that was boarded up by the Novi Mall, it was an eyesore He said if you were going coming into the Novi Mall it was the first thing you see was a boarded-up restaurant. Nobody wanted that. He said Chick-fil-A came in and they made a great presentation. He mentioned that in that zoning district, you can have drive-throughs. He looked at all the studies and all the queuing, and things they were talking about, how they are going to manage the lines and stuff. He had a feeling in his stomach that, okay, I will go along with this. He wasn't sure if it was going to be that successful with the traffic over there. He said he did not have to tell you if you have been over there, the traffic over there is probably worse than he would have liked to have seen, but at the time, based on the information we got from the professionals, that was the best decision that we could make. He hoped that he answered his question.

Member Thomas asked what his opinion was on the importance of public engagement in the decision-making process was. Mr. Lynch replied that it was critical, on the Planning Commission he enjoyed it. He said in fact, we have got a couple of people here that evening that he sees at almost every Planning Commission meeting. He said they come in; they give them their perspective. He said their comments are normally thoughtful; he appreciated that. He said it is nice to hear from the public. He said the public normally does not show up unless it is something controversial or close to them, and they do not understand. He meant; the fact is people do not understand the rules. He said we went through those consent judgments right. He said somebody must have rolled over and



went ahead and rejected somebody's property rights. He said we ended up the whole City was at risk. He said he was sure Tom would correct him if he was wrong, but the whole City is at risk if we do something to violate that. He said the trick is, how do you get to a win-win where nobody likes to see a new development going in on property, they have looked at for the last 20 years as wooded land and whatever. He said the law means people have a right to develop their property, so how do you know, what can you do in your design to mitigate that shock to the system. He said what they had done, and he did not know if any of them had been upset with him, but he is not a big proponent of this Tree Fund. He said what he has told people, the developers, if you can plant those trees on the site that you have to replace, he wanted to see them on the site. He said if they cannot be planted, and it is just too dense, then go ahead and put it into the Tree Fund, but it is nice to hear feedback. He enjoyed hearing the feedback. He said that sometimes social media can send out some misinformation, he was sure that Council has experienced it, and you try to settle everybody down, speak to the facts, listen to their concerns, and make the best decision that you can.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked Mr. Lynch for stepping forward and being interested in seeking appointment to the City Council. She said she had very basic questions and hoped he could answer. She asked him if he could please explain to them what the role of the City Council is in managing the city, including the Council's role in things like budgeting, finance, HR, employment, city operations, etc. He believed the City Council does it all. He stated on the Planning Commission, we have one little portion of that. He thought the City Council got the whole ball of wax. He said the City Council is elected. You are the ones who the people are looking for to make good decisions on finances, and with who you hire. He said the staff that he has worked with is top-notch, Barb, top notch, he was very pleased with what he has seen in the staff. He said that is your job.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey asked for a follow up, she explained she was looking for a little more detail, so she will learn how she phrased the question. She was wondering if he could tell them his understanding of level of involvement, when she said the role, the level of involvement that a City Council/City Manager or City Councilmember has, or City Council as whole has in things like doing the budget or things like HR and employment or city operations. He said that is what he meant by you rely on staff, and the staff is very good. He understood this is not a full-time job, you rely on somebody making good objective judgements, that not only affects a small group, but it also affects 65,000 people. He said you must consider that also. He said he knew it is difficult, but you must, and he said he could give you an example on the capital. He said we have talked about this on the Capital Improvement Committee, he was very impressed. He wished he had that stuff when he was at Ford managing those projects. He thought it was very impressive. He said you can drill right down from the high-level project all the way down to how much it costs, when it is going in, it was quite impressive, and that was his experience with the City. He explained you take what staff has presented to you, debate it and you put your heads together and come up with a good decision. Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked him for his response.

Mayor Fischer said excellent, and he thanked Mr. Lynch for stepping forward in front of the interrogation crew. He mentioned that in a couple of weeks at the beginning of January, City Council will get together and do goal setting. He said if you are sitting up here with us, what is the top goal that you will propose, and lobby for. Mr. Lynch said he has not given that much thought, basically it was to focus on the brand. He said Novi has its own brand, we don't realize that, but we have a brand in Novi, safe, family friendly and diverse. He said that is our brand. He said he knew people come up with different words and paragraphs about what our brand is. He said if you cannot say it in one sentence, you do not have a brand, you got a wish list. He said from his perspective, he would probably focus on the brand and find out the thing that maybe we are a little weak in, that support the brand, you know, and improve them He said maybe if there is some great ideas that you have about how to improve the brand do that. He said he was kind of indifferent. He said he would focus on the brand, those three elements. Mayor Fischer thanked him for his response and said he would move to the second round of questions.

Member Staudt commented that Mr. Lynch had a very thorough application, well written out. He said he has watched you for many years, so he did not have any additional questions. Thank you.

Member Smith said he had no further questions.

Member Heintz said everyone has a variety of different experiences. He was curious beyond the experience and your background that you have, what is your passion that would be related to and help you out in this role. What within City Council would you be involved with that you have a true passion for. Mr. Lynch replied that he would like to get more involved in the traffic stuff. He said he has been studying this for about five years and he has some good ideas, he just didn't have all the facts. He said you saw the background, theory constraints, and this is basically you are managing systems with, managing people, and people flow through the city. He thought there were some things we could do in our infrastructure that did not cost a lot, which is surprising, that can help to move that traffic quicker. He gave an example, a right turn lane, why we always put these right turn lanes that are this big. If we could just extend them another hundred feet, maybe 10 cars, just next time you are driving eastbound on 10 Mile Road or eastbound now on Eight Mile Road. He said just think to yourself, if there is, a right turn lane was about a hundred feet more, how much quicker would that traffic flow. He guaranteed you instead of sitting for three lights, you would sit for maybe one light, and it is just that little queue on the side. He said it does not cost you, you do not have to spend \$10 million for a whole lane of concrete. He said you are talking a hundred feet. He said he was not sure of the reason for that, there must be a standard that he was unaware of. He mentioned Grand River Avenue and Wixom entrance. He has studied that you need to understand where people are trying to get going. He said that area it is going to take, since we are dealing with Wixom, the county and he was not sure if even Novi in that area, it is going to take some work, but if you want to fix the problem, fine, if you don't then traffic is going to back up all the way to I-96 like it is doing right now. He said from a passion standpoint, you can see where he was at.

Member Thomas asked Mr. Lynch to describe a time when you had to balance conflicting opinions while making a decision. Mr. Lynch said yes, just about everyone. He said a more recent one, the Island Lake one is the one that he holds that is a success story. He was sure there are a lot of other ones, where you have opinions from different people. He gave the example of an apartment building that was proposed to be put on Wixom Road south of where Target is and that is a tough decision. He personally voted against it mainly because in 2011 he did not think that that zoning use was appropriate in that zoning. He said it is impossible to sit on any commission and not have conflict, you are always going to have residents, other commissioners, their different points of view. They may disagree with people, but they are not disagreeable. He thought as a group, the commission he is on, he was very pleased with, we are able to work together and pretty happy with there it is at He mentioned even at Ford, you want to talk about a political environment and have to coordinate different organizations, each organization has different cultures and different wants, and they are measured, their bonuses are measured on different things and trying to get them all together on a project, he spent a good part of his life doing that and have a little bit of gray hair.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey said she had a question about something he referenced in his application and wanted his perspective on it. She said Mr. Lynch referenced in his application that there are lifecycles for technologies, and you believe that cities follow something very similar. She asked him where he thought Novi was in the lifecycle that ranges from infancy to reinventing. Mr. Lynch believe Novi is nearing the end of the rapid growth phase. He said budgetarily, you need to be cognizant of that. He thought you were not going to get all this new revenue coming in. He said you are not going to have the luxury of getting more and more developments coming in, paying more and more taxes. He said you can look at each subdivision within the city, and each of them have their own lifecycle. He thought that we might want to start thinking about different areas of the city, kind of getting them where they are way past the rapid growth, they are past maturity, and we might want to think about reinvention of that part of the city. It might be subdivision by subdivision. He did not know. Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked him for that thought.

Mayor Fischer thanked Mr. Lynch for coming forward, he said the crux of his second questions ha been asked already, so he was all set. Mr. Lynch thanked everyone for the opportunity, he appreciated it.

## **2. Brian R. Bartlett**

Brian Bartlett said he has been a resident of Novi for a little over 40 years. He came to Novi, two years out of college and stayed until retirement, so he guessed he liked it here. He stated he has served on various Boards and organizations within the City. He served on one of the original groups that founded the Novi Parks Foundation. He worked on the Citizens Road Commission, worked on Walkable Novi, and he is currently serving on the Library Board. He said he is retired and has been active in several 501 c (3) in the area, the Michigan Freedom Center, which supports our veterans and our active military folks. He is also very active in his alumni association where we do provide scholarships to

Northville and Novi students along with Livonia students. He said you do have to go to the University of Michigan, that is one of their requirements. He is also involved in Junior Achievement of Southeast Michigan, basically supporting several high schools and grade schools in the area of entrepreneurship, finance, personal finance, and workplace readiness, including various workshops that introduced students to skilled trades and the opportunities that are there, giving them an alternative to college. He stated what he would like to see in Novi is essentially some of the same opportunities that he had. He said he was here as a person on a single income, and he was not sure if you could do that these days very easily coming right out of college and finding a place to live. He thought that we need to work at both the front end and the back end, both with our younger residents and with our senior residents to be sure that we have a thriving community. With that he opened to any questions from City Council.

Mayor Fischer thanked Mr. Bartlett for the introduction and said with this round he would start with Member Smith.

Member Smith thanked Mr. Bartlett for coming that evening. He mentioned Mr. Bartlett's time on the Walkable Novi, he was not sure how long ago that was, he wondered what he saw that has been accomplished since then and what remains to be done. Mr. Bartlett replied that they have made great strides, especially in some of the areas. He noted when he was on Walkable Novi, he was the only person on that committee who lived in three of the four quadrants of Novi. He lived in the Northwest; he lived in the Southeast and the Southwest. He thought that we had made some progress in those areas. He stated there is still some work to be done, especially in some of the more rural areas where there is a lot of gaps, He thought they have done quite a bit of work. He said we also must have some concentration on snow removal, especially with this new bus system we have, which requires people to walk quite a way to the various bus stops. He was not sure if that was entirely workable. He thought that was one of the areas we needed to concentrate on.

Member Heintz asked the same questions he asked before. He wondered if he could provide an example of where you were able to set aside your own personal preferences to focus on the needs of the community. Mr. Bartlett stated we do that several times on the Library Board. He explained that they had to reach various compromises on various issues as far as collections and a few other things where we have been very open to listening to the community. He said in fact, recently he put forward together a set of bylaws and finally got it through. He said that allows for more time for our citizens than what was in the old bylaws as far as, basically, being able to communicate with them.

Member Thomas said she would head back to the same question she had previously. She wondered what his opinion on the importance of public engagement in the decision-making process was. Mr. Bartlett said it was critical, recently the sitting Councilmembers we were here with our folks from Rethinking Libraries, we put a lot of work together putting a citizen committee together that Rethinking Libraries considered one of the best groups that we had as far as folks listening. He said they were very cognizant of inviting folks from the education community, the city council, city staff,

police, and people from political interest on both sides of the aisle. He said they had a diverse committee of about 35 individuals. He stated Rethinking libraries said it was one of the most engaged communities they have ever had and that, he was the chair of the committee that put that together. He said they worked a lot of hours with the Library staff putting together lists, contacting people and getting commitments from the community. Member Thomas thanked him for his response.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked Mr. Bartlett for stepping up that evening and showing his interest in seeking appointment to the City Council. She stated she was going to ask you the same questions she asked previously. She asked if he could explain what you see as the role of or involvement of the City Council in managing the City, including things like budget, finance, HR, employment, city operations. Mr. Bartlett stated that your role is very not unlike what we have as the Library Board, you are a director, you are someone who delegates and sets direction and corrects that direction if you find it to not be what the people want. He thought that was basically what our role is, the same type of thing as the Library Board. He said they do not hire, they basically have one person that we do a job review of that is our director, who he should say has done a commendable job getting us through COVID and everything along the way. He thought that was basically Councils role. It is the same, or like what the Library Board has. Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked him for his answer.

Mayor Fischer asked Mr. Bartlett if he was sitting up at the table with the City Council in a couple of weeks and we were at Goal Setting, what is your one or two concise goals that you would submit and lobby for. Mr. Bartlett thought the City must do a better job in getting support and at least putting together a means of dealing with the other government entities that ae out there. He did not think that we would get our fair share from Oakland County. He did not think we get our fair share on roads. He thought as far as the roads go; his number one priority would be Beck Road. He said we have a world class medical center sitting out there on Grand River and during major parts of the day, it is impassable to residents that are north of it or south of it. He said you can get down Grand River, but getting up and down from the south end, the number of times he has seen ambulances with their sirens going, trying to get clear a two-lane road, that is gridlocked. Mayor Fischer thanked him for his response.

Member Staudt said having been a long-term Library Board Member, there was a lot of discussion about funding and things like that during the most recent campaigns. He wondered what the most pressing issue for is the Library during the next wo to three years. Mr. Bartlett stated the most pressing issue for the Library is not unlike the most pressing issue that you have heard that this Council has heard from **the Fire Chief** a few weeks ago and that is the employment, the upward wage, the upward pressure on wages, and all the things that ae associated with it. He said he knew there had been a lot of confusion. He said we closed the Library this summer on Sudays, and there have been a lot of confusion about that. He said we made some kind of change to save money. He wanted to let everybody know we did not save a dime. He said we paid all our employees, were still employed, still working full-time. He said you get very little benefit from closing a building when you have a retail-oriented management accounting

system, you might turn the air conditioning down, but that is it. He said because of an employee shortage, which you walk down, you down the street, you go to a restaurant, they are all telling you that there is a shortage of employees right now. He said what we did was being able to consolidate our employees into six days and at the same time, our employees who were showing signs of burnout, we were able to say during the summer, you can, we are guaranteeing you, you can go out with your families and enjoy the summer on Sundays. He said the did not have to worry about if your were on a schedule or not, and he did not know if he could take total credit for it, but right now, for the first time, we are at full employment now that is going to show, because we have always been budgeted for full employment, that is going to show on some of our results in the next year, where we hare probably going to have to dip into Fund balance. He said since COVID we have been balancing, we have been balancing the end of the year on the basis that we are not at full employment, and we are not hiring everybody. He said that is basically our problem right now.

Mayor Fischer said thank you. Member Smith to start round two.

Member Smith did not have any further questions.

Member Heintz wondered what Mr. Bartlett was passionate about if he would be able to be applied to City Council. Mr. Bartlet said his passion, especially in retirement, has been finance because he handles his own finances as far as retirement funds and so forth. He said he said a lot of work with school-aged children, with Junior Achievement, and he also had quite a bit of experience that he put on his resume. He said the first mortgage he signed up for in the city of Novi was a bargain rate of 14%, that was in the days of having double digit inflation and he thought that kind of experience and knowledge is important. He went to business school and went through all the mind blowing, accounting for inflation classes that were terrible. He did not know if they taught them as much anymore, but back in those days, 10% inflation, that was a given. He said we all assumed that that was what life was like, because we lived with it for 10 years. He said he did not know where this economy is going, the only thing he could tell you for sure about the economy is next year you are going to hear one side tell you that it is wonderful, and you are going to hear the other side tell you what is terrible and you better watch the various indices and try to determine for yourself what is true.

Member Thomas said she had a couple of thoughts, and unfortunately, we only get wo questions. She said we have a lot of people who are out here, and she appreciated the fact everyone was coming out and showing interest. She asked Mr. Bartlett what makes him the best choice to be sitting up here with us at the table. Mr. Bartlett said he believed his years of experience in Novi, he thought his living in various quadrants of the areas of this city as a resident and dealing with, everything rom well water to city water, he thought he could have more empathy towards the citizens that, because he has been in their shoes. Member Thomas thanked him for his answers.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey said she was going to let Mr. Bartlett expand on something that you wrote in your application as well. She said he mentioned that one of the areas that

you are interested in is finding a path for young adults and persons in lower income areas. She asked him if he had any specifics that you would like to see addressed. Mr. Bartlett said we have various areas in the City especially we have put through a public transit system, and he had a question to whether Oakland County really looked at our needs. He said we have mobile home communities, we have manufactured home communities where a lot of our lower income would probably be, our lowest income citizens live. He said after watching their various videos he has a clear understanding about the importance of that system to people outside of Novi, but if you are living along Napier Road in one of those manufactured home communities, you have a good distance, a walk, sizable walking distance, especially in the winter to get to a bus stop. He said if you live in a mobile home community on 13 Mile, our cheapest apartments in this city, are all on the northern border. He thought Westgate and he thought a neighborhood called Waterview Farms. He said he did live there, so he did not know, but he thought those two residents may be our only residents still under a thousand dollars a month and they have no access to public transit. He said in fact, if they lived across the street in Walled Lake, they could arrange for a trip for \$2.00, but their address is Novi. He said those are the types of things he thought we should fight for and should look at. Mayor Pro Tem Casey said wonderful, and she thanked him for his response.

Mayor Fischer said he did not have a second-round question for Mr. Bartlett.

Member Staudt said he did not have any additional questions for Mr. Bartlett.

Mayor Fischer thanked Mr. Bartlett for coming that evening before us, we appreciate it.

### **3. Brian Coward**

Mayor Fischer apologized for the previous mix up in the order. He said Mr. Coward could start his two-minute introduction.

Brian Coward thanked the Mayor and City Council for inviting him out that evening to interview for the City Council. He said he has been a Novi resident for 32 years. He has been married for 20 years and has two wonderful young adults in college, one at Eastern Michigan, and one at the University of Central Lancaster in the UK. He said he has been an engineer his whole life, 36 years in engineering in automotive engineering, helping to build the cars and trucks that hopefully everybody drives. He said he has a bachelor's from Michigan State University and an MBS from Eastern as well. He said for 22 years he has been both the treasurer and secretary of his lodges. He stated as far as charity is concerned; they volunteer twice a year at the Hospitality House in Commerce. He thought that he would bring integrity, thoroughness, and independence. He said he was not affiliated with any party. He came to Novi a while back from Allen Park, Downriver and came to Novi because of the diversity, the school system, the parks, and recreations that are provided here, outstanding compared to many other cities. He said the only reason he was volunteering for this is because he knew it is a short-term position. He said he had no further ambition to go on, just to fill this position until someone can be duly elected.

Mayor Fischer thanked him for his interest and said he would start his line of questioning with Member Heintz.

Member Heintz said so there might be no surprises here, he would start with the same question. He asked if Mr. Coward could provide an example of where he could set aside his personal needs and interests to identify the needs and interests of a larger entity, in this case, at a city level or any other experiences you might have had. Mr. Coward stated he hasn't been in the public sector at all. He has only been in the private sector as an engineer, but there are in the private sector that are the same issues that come up in the public sector. He said people have wants, people have needs, how do you manage both of those things. He said both money and personal interests and career goals and things like that. He said there are a lot of similarities between the two and he thought that is what he could bring because he was a problem solver at work, and he thought he would be a problem solver here.

Member Thomas asked Mr. Coward what his opinion of the importance of public engagement and the decision-making process. Mr. Coward said it was necessary. He stated the people are who we all serve, even in the private sector, if we do not know what they want, then we just go around muddling amongst ourselves and say, well, let's try this. He said when you listen to the community and you listen to the people it gives you a sense of who's there and why are they there, and what other people have similar interests. He said an issue comes up and you will get 10 people that are really interested in it, and maybe the rest of the community says, yeah, we don't really care. He said listening, if you do not listen to them to again with, then you do not have any clue as to what is going on as far as meeting their needs. Member Thomas thanked him for his response.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey said she was going to ask him the same question that she started with, and that might be a trend that people are picking up on, but can you explain to us how you see the role of City Council or the involvement level the City Council has in managing the city in things like areas such as budgeting, finance, HR, city operations etc. He said several people have already said that is what Council does, and it is true. He said that is what the council does. He thought the Council provides much more than just that. He thought they provided, as one gentleman said, the brand of the community. He said it also provides interactions between other cities, other communities, and how all the communities can be uplifted with some single idea. He thought Novi was a great example of this. He said Novi and Northville have the best school systems in the state and that is not by accident. He said that is because people have really interested in raising our level of education and information for people. Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked him for his response.

Mayor Fischer asked Mr. Coward is he was sitting up here with us in a couple weeks for goal setting, he asked him to give us one of two key goals that you would submit and lobby for. Mr. Coward said Parks and Recreation was one of his favorites. He said the



Parks and Recreation in Novi are fantastic compared to many other cities. He said he was an international traveler, so he has compared it to other cities internationally and Novi is really up there. He said we have the sports that we need, we have the recreation we need, we have the parks, the trees, the walkways, the dog runs, and things like that. He said if we let that go fallow, we will be doing ourselves a great disservice, because other communities look at us and say, boy, I really like the parks.

Member Staudt asked Mr. Coward if he could go back 32 years and look at Novi and wave a magic wand and make a bunch of changes based on what you know now, what would they have been. Mr. Coward said he would make it more of a foot community. He said the traffic runs right through the center of the city, runs north, south, east, west, and when that pavement must be repaired or something like that the city comes to a standstill. He said he just came back from England and their communities are set up individually with foot traffic. He said the foot traffic reaches all the shops, and then you have the train traffic and the bus traffic on the outside of it and people walk places and it builds for a healthy community. He thought 32 years ago, he would have done a different downtown. Member Staudt said as a guy who started on the Parks and Recreation Commission and got to City Council because he wanted to fix some things he appreciated his comments about that. Thank you.

Member Smith thanked Mr. Coward for coming out that evening. He said with regard, in your application, you mentioned consensus building, he asked if he could give an example of how you have done that in the past and how you would bring that to Council. Mr. Coward said in the private sector, he could only give you that example. He said they have several different activities that go on, we have finance, we have quality, we have engineering, we have all sorts of different activities, and everyone is trying to get their thing in first. He stated if we supply everybody's wishes, cars would be a million dollars, and it would be impossible. He said you must have someone that goes into every meeting and says, "I want to do this", we have to have these outcomes, and that is the kind of position he has been in as a product engineer for his entire career. He stated people bark, people come in, they have other agendas, and, in the end, you must put a product on the road, the most economical, compromised if you can. He said you do have people that are passionate about their activity, for whatever reason, either they want to move up in the company or they want to whatever reason, you have to work with them individually, as well as in a group and make sure that everyone follows the same rules of conduct and then you come up with an output and you have to do it very quickly. Member Smith thanked him for his response.

Member Heintz said he had no further questions.

Member Thomas said she will go back to the question of why you with all the people applying for this opening, what makes you the best choice. Mr. Coward commented that is what his wife asked him before he came here. Why would you want to do this? He said he is project driven, he saw the appointment as a certain project timeline and what he can put forth in that timeline, he had some qualities that he thought would be helpful business qualities, consensus qualities, and he thought he would be a good candidate

because he had no expectation of what follows the appointment ends. He said he did not have any further ambitions and would just serve the community in this one short time frame.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey said her question for him is if in your project lens, what city services do you think are absent, unnecessary or need improvement and how might you work to try to solve them. Mr. Coward said he mentioned previously that he just came back from Europe and the bus system is fantastic. They have what you can get from one city to another city just by picking up the phone calling an Uber and they are reliable, they are quick, they are safe, and he thought he was no sure a bus system would serve our community the best, but he did think that we must reinvent traffic here. Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked him for his response.

Mayor Fischer thanked him; he was all set with his questioning.

Member Staudt thanked him, said he did not have any additional questions, but he did have one comment for him. He said we have a one, maybe two-year project with a million sub projects under it, we are always involved in having somebody who is goal oriented and also has a focus on starting projects and finishing is important though. Thank you.

Member Smith said he did not have any further questions, thank you.

Mayor Fischer thanked him for stepping forward for questioning.

#### **4. Serge Delinois**

Serge Delinois said he has been a resident of Novi for 20 years, enjoyed it, and has no intention of leaving. He said this is an almost perfect city. He said in that time, he has engaged in the community by becoming a Novi Ambassador and he the Novi Ambassador Program and found out even more how much he liked the City. He learned about the City and how they use metrics to qualify and quantify all of what they do, you realize that his is a really professional organization and he was proud to be part of it. He said he was also the president of the North Haven Woods HOA, the Homeowners Association. He stated that, he has taken a much smaller version of your work taking the to balance the needs of the community to the community as a whole and having liberty, but everything working in order. He said he currently works as a consultant for the US Department of Energy, and he has been there for 15 years. He said before tht he worked for other federal agencies and defense contractors in the past and in his employment with them. He has been specializing it in information technology, and information security for those departments. He felt like what is going on with cities, and they are getting ransomed and getting hacked, and all these things that are happening to cities, he felt like his skill set would enhance everybody else's skill set with his experience there. He commented tht his experience would benefit the Council and furthermore, he knew it is tough situation that the Council is in right now trying to pick a council member this, this

should really be elected. He said he realized that he did not run for re-election, he wanted to serve out this term, and do his part.

Member Thomas thanked Mr. Delinois for coming in for the interview. She asked him what his opinion of the importance of public engagement in the decision-making process. Mr. Delinois said it all begins and ends with the public. He said we serve the public and we must know what they want; it is our mission to carry out their vision. He said if we do not start with the public, we will just do busy work.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked Mr. Delinois for stepping forward that evening and showing his interest in seeking appointment. She said her first question for him was to have him explain to us what the role of City Council is or what level of involvement the City Council should have in managing the City. Mr. Delinois said the City Council should take the opinion of the people of Novi and then turn that into a vision. He said then we take that vision and to the little bits and pieces that it takes to get to that vision. Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked him for his response.

Mayor Fischer asked Mr. Delinois if he were sitting up here with Council in a couple weeks for goal setting, what would be his one or two concise goals that he would submit and lobby for? Mr. Delinois stated that working for the US Department of Energy, he has learned what is available and we have so many options to save money and save the environment at the same time, and not even for environmental reasons, but for cost-cutting reasons. If we push the investment of solar panels and electric cars for our city, it will enhance the city, it will give us positive light in the public and save us money which is a win-win. Mayor Fischer thanked him for his answer.

Member Staudt said he was going to expand a little bit on one of his previous questions. He said you mentioned that you would help guide Novi into the future. He asked Mr. Delinois to give him an example, outside of what you talked about just now with energy and solar and vehicles. What would you do to help us guide us into the future. Mr. Delinois said he would take a leap of faith and other communities have done it, and there is documentation that, for example, changing to electric vehicles, saving tons of money on fuel and maintenance, that is just one thing. He said if we started making those small choices, putting solar panels on top of buildings, and running electric cars, that would make a little bit of a difference, but you add them all up together then it becomes a big difference. Member Staudt thanked him for his response.

Member Smith thanked Mr. Delinois for coming out that evening. He said he thought he would probably know the answer to his question already from your introduction. He wondered what the part of the city that captured his interest when you went through the Ambassador Academy, and would like to get into further. Mr. Delinois said the one that captured his interest and narrow saw it coming was sanitation. He said what they do is you never hear about it, it happens, and they are the unsung hero, then you never hear about what he would want to be interested in modernizing the infrastructure for the police, fire communications, the website, all those technology things. Those are where

he felt like he would add a lot of value. Member Smith thanked him for his answers, he totally agreed on sanitation, that blew him away also, how much stuff is underground.

Member Heintz said he was going to deviate, follow that one up. He said you caught his ear when using the term almost perfect city, he was curious if you could expand upon that. He wondered why he chose those words, what makes it almost perfect. Mr. Delinois said he grew up in Florida down in Miami. He said one of the things they never had living in suburban Miami was the openness, the trees, the planning for trees, like when we bought our house in our community 20 years ago, the City forced us to plant trees and had us put the tree line behind us. He said there was a lot of forethought and where the water was going to drain. He said that is one of the wonderful things about Novi, because they think ahead. He said sometimes you hear people say, look, there is a sidewalk that goes to nowhere, he said no, they are thinking ahead, sooner or later that is going to connect to the next sidewalk and to the next sidewalk and there will be a sidewalk that goes all the way down the street, he said in sport thinking, that makes Novi almost perfect.

Mayor Fischer said he would start with Member Thomas for round two of questions.

Member Thomas said she would go back to her questions, why are you the right person to be up here with Council. Mr. Delinois replied that he did not have any ambitions, he had a skill set that he thought was useful and that he could benefit the City that he had been living in, it was just a way of giving back.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey asked Mr. Delinois if he could describe a time for us when you had to tell someone an answer they did not want to hear. She wondered what the situation was, what action he took and what their response was. Mr. Delinois commented that he had a boss that used to tell him that he always said no to everything, and he replied, well, if it is a bad idea, he is going to say no. He said one time he came up with something that was a really good idea, and he was shocked, and they had a whole different relationship. He thought that you must be honest, you have to say what you think without feeling like there is going to be reciprocal action taken against you. He said you have to have an environment that lets you speak because nobody has all the right answers. Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked him for his answer.

Mayor Fischer said he was all set with his questions.

Member Staudt said he was all set also, thank you.

Member Smith said he was all set, thank you.

Mayor Fischer said there were no further questions, he thanked Mr. Delinois for coming out and interviewing for Council.

## 5. Priya Gurumurthy

Priya Gurumurthy said she was a dedicated community advocate, Global Director of IT of Yunfeng International and a proud resident of the City of Novi. She said she had over a decade of experience in public service both in the City of Holland, as well as the City of Novi. She was able to serve the community being on several City governing bodies, supporting education, history, International Festival, to the Library, as well as the Youth Assistance. She said her journey in Novi began as an ambassador. She said that is when she realized she had a greater understanding and appreciation for how the City of Novi works for its citizens. Since then, she has been able to serve on the Novi Housing and Community Development Advisory Committee, Novie Public Board as a trustee and the Youth Assistance as a secretary as well as the vice chair right now. She said one of her favorite highlights she had was being part of the strategic planning process for the Novi Public Library, where she was there from the beginning, from vendor selection through aligning on the focus areas right now. She commented that as a City Councilmember, her vision is to create a more inclusive, prosperous as well as a vibrant community. She planned to focus on improving optimization for road construction, expanding affordable housing, fostering a senior friendly community, cultivating environmental stewardship as well as promoting STEM in this community. She said what sets her apart is the proven track record and leadership, negotiation, strategic planning as well as the board experience from a different city in Michigan. She was known for her ability to bring people together, in fact, across the globe, and build trust to overcome the differences through a data driven approach, achieving common goals. She said in closing, she was deeply committed to serving our city and looked forward to the possibility of working together for a better future for all our residents. She closed with a quote by Mahatma Gandhi, "Be the change that you wish to see in the world."

Mayor Fischer thanked Ms. Gurumurthy for her introduction. He said for this round of questions he would start with Mayor Pro Tem Casey.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked Ms. Gurumurthy for stepping forward and showing interest in seeking an appointment. She said she would start with her basic first question. She asked Ms. Gurumurthy if she could explain to us the role of City Council or the involvement that City Council should have in managing the city. Ms. Gurumurthy said first, she thought that the City Council is kind of a bridge or liaison between the community as well as the city. She felt that City Council should understand all the details behind the different governing bodies and how the city performs all the action, but also create a framework based on community feedback and insights, and then framework and guidance for the city and staff to set goals and perform and execute for the goals. Mayor Pro Tem Casey said wonderful and thanked her for her response.

Mayor Fischer commented that Ms. Gurumurthy mentioned quite a few great goals in your introduction. He asked if she were up her with Council in a couple of weeks, what would be one or two that you would hone in-on as far as goal setting, submission and

lobbying other members. Ms. Gurumurthy said she was assuming that the optimization for road construction is already going to be a part of it. She said what she was going to lobby for would be fostering a senior friendly community because she thought that we have a lot of seniors and there are a lot of opportunities to bring them together and most importantly, having them inspire the younger generation and share the history of Novi. Secondly, she said she was passionate about environmental stewardship, preserving and working towards sustainability goals. She said that would be another one that she would work towards. Mayor Fischer said very good, thank you very much.

Member Staudt commented that she had the most comprehensive questionnaire of anybody that evening. He said one of the things that reading through it is exactly how do you feel about the role of public safety and the priority it provides to a city like the City of Novi. Ms. Gurumurthy said first, she wanted to start by saying, that when she said she was the proud resident, she felt that Novi is a very, very safe community, which she was very proud of. She believed public safety is something that across the community they must feel very safe in terms of all aspects, whether it is working during the night, being part of any event, they should feel safe. She thought it is very important for the City Council to be able to create that space, a safe space, working with the City, working with the staff, even understanding the community if there are any gaps in terms of safety. She said that is what she would think, first of all understand the gaps, but then also work with the City and staff to be able to create that safe environment, if there are any gaps. Member Staudt thanked her for her response.

Member Smith thanked Ms. Gurumurthy for coming out that evening. He said his question relates to what you did and how it is always interesting to compare how different communities or different organizations try to get to the same goal of serving the residents. He asked if she could expand a little on what you did in Holland, and possibly what you could bring to Novi from that experience. Ms. Gurumurthy felt that was one of her strengths as a candidate and being part of several boards in Holland. She said one of the things that we always talked about was, how do we preserve the Dutch history, even though we are doing a lot of several events across the city, whether it is being part of the Tulip Time Board, Ready for School Board, or being part of the Holland Museum. She said when she thought about being on a committee, when Holland Museum, what we did was we were able to bring the people together for a fundraising event, but at the same time, share the history, we did trivia of the history of the heartland, and fundraise. She thought that was one of the important things that she had learned. Second, she would say economic development. Whenever she was on the Tulip Time Board, or part of the committee that organized the first International Festival, it was all about looking at the numbers and being able to see how we could foster the economic growth within the city, support local businesses, and most importantly, bring people from outside the city, to our city, Holland. She said that is what they did, through different events, again, as with part of the Tulip Time Festival, or the International Festival, and then one of the things she thought was with respect to the environmental stewardship, we always talked about, you know, she gained a lot of insights, in terms of environmental initiative where we were doing in terms of protecting Lake Macatawa, or Lake Michigan, or even the local parks.

She said those are the things that she will be able to bring, as a City Councilmember. Member Smith thanked her for her answers.

Member Heintz mentioned she was interested in sustainability and that connected with his first question. He said with tht situation, or in general, if there is a situation where there is a personal interest, and whether it be an interest, somebody is proposing some development, or whatever the case is, when you have a vested interest or value, how do you balance that with the interest of the community, your personal values, balance with the residents as a whole of the City of Novi. Ms. Gurumurthy said that is something that she thought as a community member, everyone must keep, for example, if she was on a board, she was a woman of color, she was from the Indian origin also, she knew she had to represent, but at the same time, she could not be biased. She said that is something she always has in her mind, tht she needs to represent. She stated that she also must wear the shoes of each community member and do the right thing and use date for driving the decisions that anything else. She noted that is what she normally does in terms of looking at it from a bigger perspective, and across the perspectives versus just like one narrow mindset.

Member Thomas asked if she could give her opinion on the importance of public engagement in the decision-making process, whether it is professionally or even within the family or for members and/or within the community. Ms. Gurumurthy thought it was extremely important to get public engagement in decision making. She stressed here that number one, being able to create those opportunities or forums, to gather proper employee feedback and engagement is crucial, whether it is surveys, or listening sessions, whether it is open forums, you must do that, so you get that information. Secondly, you cannot just get the info, you also take the data so you can be able to analyze that information, and then be able to share why we are doing t, how the engagement drove your decision making, those are the most important things on top of getting the engagement from the community as well, she will stress including the community for all decision making.

Mayor Fischer thanked Ms. Gurumurthy and said he would start round two starting with Mayor Pro Tem Casey.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey said Ms. Gurumurthy mentioned in her application, that we have some challenges with home affordability. She asked what she thought the Council could do or the City can do related to making housing more affordable for residents and people who want to move into the City. Ms. Gurumurthy replied, as a person who moved into the City, and again, she did not have a lot of time to go and find, but one of the things, when she thought about it, she was thinking about, first of all, it is not an easy solution. She thought what we need to do is we need to have a systematic approach. She commented that when you take housing, there are so many different variables that go into housing. We need to see how we can come up with and balance of cost, but not compromising on the benefits of housing. We need to do that, in fact, getting community feedback and insights as well, and determining how we can come up with some affordable housing. She didn't think there was one quick solution. She believed we

needed to take a systematic approach, in fact, list all the different variable that you know, basically contribute to a housing, and then look at which ones we can compromise your balance to provide affordable housing and be able to be open and transparent and sharing on why we did that, and how we did that. Mayor Pro Tem Casey said wonderful, thank you.

Mayor Fischer said he had no further questions, thank you.

Member Staudt commented that she did a very comprehensive application and a lot of good information in there, he appreciated you taking the time to do that. Thank you.

Member Smith said he had one more question regarding a much talked about subject, goal setting. He asked Ms. Gurumurthy how she would arrive at what the goals need to be and how do you measure progress towards reaching the conclusion of those goals. Ms. Gurumurthy said that is something she really loved talking about also. She said at work almost every time we talk about projects or goal setting for a year. She said what she talked to her business customers is that you must first start with a problem. She said first, we need to get community insights and feedback, identify all the problems or opportunities, and then be able to set the goals She noted before setting the goals, she said what we do is her vision has always been able to create a roadmap for a function. So, for example, in the next three to five years, what are the high-level roadmaps that you want to go after, and within the roadmap, you have road construction one year or second year, then you want to just list your goals. She stated even with listing goals, you want to clearly specify your targets, or measurable like success criteria is what they do and measurable targets, because you do not want to just set the goals and then just leave it for three years. She said every year, you want to evaluate two things. The first thing is, are you progressing, as you said, for example, carbon, you know, whether you are saying for sustainability goals, you want to reduce the consumption of water, then you say you want to reduce a 10% across Novi, then you want to be in two years, then you want to be able to measure in the first year. Are you moving forward or are you stuck. So, the first thing you want to measure is your progress, Second, you want to do is evaluate your roadmap as well as your goals every year. She said she was not saying it is going to change, but you want to make sure through community engagement, or what you are hearing are your priorities are still the same. She said do you want to do that analysis and make sure you are sill moving in the same track, same roadmap, same set of goals. She said basically the measurement and the KPIs are key for success. She stated that is basically what she would like you to know, like proposing terms of goas and setting goals framework, but the key important thing is working with City staff, identifying problems, setting the framework, and working with them and guiding them to execute is the key. Member Smith thanked her for her response.

Member Heintz asked why she noted earlier that one of your favorite activities was strategic planning with the Library, but you just answered that there, your enjoyment of the strategic planning and just the ways of implementing that. He said unless she had anything else to add, thank you.



Member Thomas thanked Ms. Gurumurthy for having given them so much information, she said she felt like she knew her, so she did not have any further questions. Thank you.

Member Fischer echoed those sentiments. He said it was clearly the most comprehensive application and thanked Ms. Gurumurthy for all the details and the effort she put into it and thanked Ms. Gurumurthy for coming out that evening to the interview. Ms. Gurumurthy thanked him so much.

## **6. Mihran Kochyan**

Mihran Kochyan thanked the Mayor and the City Council. Wow 16 candidates, this is unbelievable. He thanked everyone for allowing them all to participate in this. He said he has been a Novi resident for over 40 years now and has been married 37 years of negotiating. He said he has been a project manager in various forms all the way from the private sector in the automotive industry in the healthcare industry, mostly with information technology. He said one day in 2007, he saw three black cars pulled in front of his house and did not know who they were. Apparently, he was drafted by the federal government to be one of the leading experts on cyber technology, and cyber warfare. He said he was drafted by the federal government to serve in the intel community, he could not talk too much about that, but he did know that this is not a violation of the Hatch Act. He said after serving in the federal government, for all those years, he met a variety of people all the way from the Congress, our representatives, to some Senate members, and even the Vice President and our current president as well, having served under four different presidents. He stated one thing he did note was his ability to plan and the government does not always look like that, but yes, we do plan, we did plan at that time. He said he liked to decompose things greatly by saying, take a complex issue, break it down, break it down, break it down until we can manage it, and that is what you manage. That is what you drive. He thought a prior candidate said keep going on that path, keep going, but then use the things on the side of your head, listen, to make sure that path is still valid. He said if it is not auto correct.

Mayor Fischer thanked Mr. Kochyan for his introduction. He said he would start this round of questions.

Mayor Fischer asked Mr. Kochyan if he was sitting up here with the Council in a few weeks, what would his number one or number two goals tht you would lobby for. Mr. Kochyan said one of the goals would be 21% of our population senior citizens. How do we best represent those citizens like his neighbors, a senior citizen, and he noticed her snow, it blocked her driveway. She had to pay for a snow service to clear her driveway then the plow came and left about three and a half feet tall wall full of snow that she could not remove. He said Lord forbid, if there was a needed medical service, if she needed an ambulance. He said by the time we called the truck back out; it could have been too late. He said he would look at our snow service and understand how that works and if we can do a little better job, making sure we do not block people in when possible. Secondly, he had a vision for our youth to get involved with the seniors. He said we have a great deal of youth in Novi that are technically competent, and we have got a senior

citizen base that wants communication. He thought, what better way to get them involved with setting up emails, getting an email server, setting that up for our senior citizens, consulting with those senior citizens and helping them use every service available to the city electronically, so they could benefit in the long run. He said he had a third goal, and that would be project management. He said we are not teaching our kids project management that well. He thought about it, go to a ninth grader, and say, "What are your plans for college". How much have you saved? How much have you taken? Have you taken the core curriculum? He said what you are doing, imagine sitting with them, and drawing out an entire project plan for them, and say look, this month, you will be doing this this semester, you will be studying this month, you are saving X number of dollars, that is going to get you closer to this goal. He said through using project management techniques, through using predictive analytics, data analytics will be able to help these students in the long run. He said he bets a lot of our senior citizens already have this ability they can help the students with. Mayor Fischer thanked him very much. He said he would move to his left for the next question.

Member Staudt mentioned Mr. Kochyon had an extraordinary skill set, much of it is probably not even listed here. How would you see using that in and transferring your knowledge and skills to our City staff and the vendors that we work with without basically taking over the project and doing it yourself. Mr. Kochyon said he looked at himself more as a consultant, giving direction to them, and making sure they stayed on the path of the plan that we all laid forward. He said he was not going to hack their computers, but what we will do instead is work with them to help the planning phase, if he builds the plan, even if we go to the vendor, if he builds a plan for them to do something during the project, it is his plan. He wanted to work with the vendors and build the plans together. He said therefore, we both succeed or fail at the same time. He said we will try to manage that as best we could. He said he did not know if he answered the question. Member Staudt said, probably not, but it is a tough one. He said he has interviewed quite a few people who have had an intelligence background, and you guys really are smart, but it is tough to transfer that knowledge to your underlings. Thank you. Mr. Kochyon said currently he is consulting Blue Cross, Blue Shield, giving them cyber technology and protection, and consulting on how they can best work their network. He said he is not doing the work, he is sitting back and directing them and helping them.

Member Smith thanked Mr. Kochyon for coming out that evening. He stated that in his application you had said improving communications with residents would be one of the things you would want to focus on. He asked him where he saw we could improve on that, or what are we doing? Mr. Kochyon said he loved the Novi News; he thought it was a great paper. He said it has our community in there. He thought forums like this are another communication means. He thought email distribution to our residents would even help our website to keep that current with the current developments in the City, just making sure we are on top of absolutely everything that is going on to the city and being transparent. He said that is really where he was going with that. Member Smith thanked him for his response.

Member Heintz wondered what passion of his would be able to help you be successful on a position like this. Mr. Kochyon replied that his passion is project management and technology. He thought his ability to bring people together, build strong, cohesive teams, and work together would be his strength and would help him as a Councilmember.

Member Thomas asked Mr. Kochyon his opinion on the importance of public engagement and the decision-making process. Mr. Kochyon said he wanted to take this back to private sector as well, the greatest tool we have as leaders are the things of the sides of our heads, our ears, listening to what the people truly want and need, determining what they need from what they said they want, working with them. Once again, engaging in dialogue more and more to dictate what those plans must be. He thought that was the greatest thing we could do.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked Mr. Kochyon for his interest and his stepping forward that evening in seeking appointment. Mayor Pro Tem Casey asked Mr. Kochyon if he could explain to the Council the role of the City Council, or the involvement City Council should have in which the city operates. He looked at it as Council providing direction. He said we are representatives of the people. He said that is the people that put us here. He said when he was walking through to Congress to do his first presentation, Leon Panetta looked at him and said, who pays you? Remember, it is Congress. He said he turned and said, no, it is taxpayer dollars, it is the people. He said he would like to bring forward and say, okay, let's use the years, let's listen to the people, as best represent them and then let's get direction to our programs. Let's build our plans to drive what they truly need. Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked him for his answers.

Mayor Fischer said he was all set in his second round, he had no further questions.

Member Staudt thanked him very much; you have a phenomenal background.

Member Smith said he had no further questions, thank you.

Member Thomas said she had no further questions, thank you.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey said she was not going to let him off the hook that easily. She asked Mr. Kochyon if he could share some of his thoughts on what city services are absent, unnecessary or need improvement, and how you might work to solve some of those with us. Mr. Kochyon said he talked about transportation already, so he chose something different. He would like to see more engagement between the seniors and the youth and try to bring them together. He said you have this wealth of knowledge that could be imparted on the youth, and vice versa. He explained it as knowledge sharing sessions that we should be doing to try to benefit both sides. Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked him for his perspective, now you are off the hook Thank you very much.

## **7. George Kortlandt**

George Kortlandt thanked the Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, Councilmembers, and Administration. He thanked them for giving all the candidates the opportunity to be there that evening to speak to you to explain our own thoughts. He said he would like to forego his opening statement; you have his application. He said he filled it out the best that he could. He said he would like to take questions from you, a lot of them. He understood you are limiting it to two per person, but he wanted to make one brief comment beforehand. He said there is an 800-pound gorilla in the room and that is the fact that his Council may be looking at things in a sense of our versus theirs. He asked which side is this person on presenting to us that evening. He said he would like to tell you that in the nearly 22 years that he got to serve you and many other people in our Novi community as a school board member, never will you find a decision he made that was one that could be called political. He said yes, there are terms of politics that people use, but never in the classic sense. He said with that, he opened it up for questions, if he may.

Mayor Fischer said if they want to go to three or four questions, he will allow them for you, he started this round with Member Staudt.

Member Staudt thanked Mr. Kortlandt. He mentioned that Mr. Kortlandt has spent a long time on the school board, you had an aborted period where you basically went a few years where you had an opportunity to reconsider running again, what cause you to get back into it at the point, and why are you even considering coming over to the City Council at this point. Mr. Kortlandt said the term with the Novi Community School District was a successful one and he accomplished pretty much everything he wanted to do there. He said as you know, it is ranked the number one district in the state, he was very proud of that. He said it was done in partnership with the City of Novi. He said you and I have spoken on numerous occasions about joint efforts between the city and the school district, and we have been very successful and accomplishing many of those. He said the corner park, Fuerst Park, that was originally the Fuerst property of the sisters owned by the school district, and we negotiated a deal together. Most recently there was a deal that took the property called the Bosco properties, and that became city property by trade with the school district. He said he was not on board at that time. He said the reason that he feels that Novi is a place to attract him in this type of position is that he felt he had skill sets that are well suited for this. He said many of the things that we do as a City Council are identical, if not pretty much to those that the school board does. He said there would be questions that evening, he knew he had heard them before, asking him things about the relationship, but that he would say there are opportunities here that he can afford the city a chance to deal with him in those areas. He said hopefully he can help move things forward here and with the Council and the Mayor. Member Staudt thanked Mr. Kortlandt for his response.

Member Smith mentioned one of the things you said in your application that you are interested in doing was reviewing the relationship between the city and the developers and contractors. He asked Mr. Kortlandt to expand on that. He was not sure he knew what that meant. Mr. Kortlandt explained going back a good number of years, the city had a poor relationship with developers and contractors. He personally has had experience with contractors who said they really did not want to do his project because they did not want to be involved with trying to get permits from the city of Novi, you will have to do it on your own. He said that struck him as odd, and he knew that we have made major advances in that relationship with those types of people. He stated recently, on a radio program, that is well broadcast on WJR on Sunday mornings, the gentleman who ran that program deals with the construction, the development phases, and they were speaking laughingly about their relationship with Novi. He was surprised to hear that, he thought, if that is going on that publicly on a radio station of that type, then perhaps we should be investigating that a bit. He said he was not condemning any group, not damning them, but wanting to improve things. Mr. Smith thanked him for his explanation.

Member Heintz wondered how you go about a situation when you have a strong belief or value or perspective or opinion, when it differs compared to the rest of the city, the residents of Novi, how do you balance your interest when they might be different than the majority of no votes. Mr. Kortlandt said if his opinion is different from the majority of Novi, he would have to understand that as a Councilmember he was part of a representative form of government and therefore he was to represent the public and they got to vote for him. He said they know this is obviously an appointment case, but normally, they get to vote for us and tell us no, we do not agree with you, you are gone. We voted against you. He said that is a legitimate way that they must respond to a councilmember not representing them. He said now, do does he think it has to come to that? Of course not. He said there can be compromise many times on the board of education. The votes would be 7-0. Unanimous, but there were times when they were 6-1 and he might be the one that was the odd one out. He said that is okay to be the one that loses in a vote, it isn't the end of the world. It is not something that means you are not doing your job; you are representing what you think is correct. He stated sometimes you must represent the minorities in the group to not just the majorities. He said that is one of the things that people look at and say, well, representative form of government is not a democracy, but in a democracy, democracy, excuse me, has some flaws. He said the fact that if every vote is to be taken and you will have to go with the will of the majority, soon you are minorities are not getting what they should be getting.

Member Thomas felt like you have probably had a significant amount of experience with having people public engagement, where people come to you, and they want you to know how they feel. She said the question she has been asking she felt he could answer it quite well that you have a lot of experience with it, what is your opinion of the importance of that public engagement in that decision making process. Mr. Kortlandt said one of the things that he has with his experience is something that you can look back on and see how he actually did not just what he was saying he will do, he believed that it is very important to get the input from the public He believed it is so important that we have the state law, the Open Meetings Act, that actually requires public comment sections in

these meetings. He said that is sort of the minimum. He said what he did was in the school district situation, he would attend 250 to 300 events throughout the district in the course of the year, and he did that for several reasons. He said he thoroughly enjoyed and was just tickled to watch our students perform at their best, and the second, maybe a little more important, he was able to talk with the people in the community by being out there with them and find out what sort of things they were thinking about and wanting to have done.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked Mr. Kortlandt for showing interest in seeking an appointment. She said she would not ask her first question because you pretty much answered it already, which was great, thank you for that. She stated she was going to give him the floor for a minute and ask him if he would expand on a comment that he made in his application, which was that he wanted to improve the well being of our underserved communities of elderly, disabled, and those who are current or past military. She wondered what ideas he had, what would he do? What aren't we doing? Mr. Kortlandt explained one of the things he did not want to make the mistake of that evening was trying to come up with wonderful solutions to problems that you folks may look at and say, yeah, that is not our concern at all. He did not want to impose those on there, but the reason that he looked at those areas, the underserved, is that he was aware of problems. The underserved he was talking about is number one, those who are elderly. He said he may be classified in that group, and he has come to know some of the problems a little more specifically, because of his current age. He said he would like to see what we can do working with the elderly. He was not aware of all the solutions, perhaps he was not aware of all the problems either. He thought that is where he thought he could be a member of the Council who puts things forward to discuss, maybe have research done by the Administration, if we would care to have it done. Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked him for his answer.

Mayor Fischer asked Mr. Kortlandt if he was so fortunate, or sometimes unfortunate, to sit up at this table, in a few weeks for goal setting, what would be your top one or two goals that you would propose. Mr. Kortlandt replied, his top goal, not one that he would propose to everyone, but his goal is to learn as much as he could in very short order to be a productive council member. He understood there are a lot of things that you folks have been doing over the years, some might call them behind the scenes, still being transparent. He thought those are things that we all could get together to work on to accomplish together. He mentioned the area of the underserved. He explained that when he talks about the underserved, he will talk about the senior citizens, those who are disabled, both physically and mentally, and our military, our current serving as well as retired. He said he would like to see what sort of things a city like Novi, the shining light on the hill can accomplish for those folks. He said perhaps there is not an area, but he did know right now, talking about those who may be mentally challenged that our school district is being challenged severely in that area, trying to present the solutions to problems that our students have. He said they need more funding. He wondered if there if there are areas that the City could be involved with also, whether it be in funding, whether it be in activities, not knowing the solution yet.

Mayor Fischer thanked him for his response. He said Member Staudt would start the round two questioning.

Member Staudt thanked Mr. Kortlandt. He said over the years, you and I have talked a lot and frequently disagreed on a lot of issues. He said a lot times we agree on things. He said one of the things that he asked an earlier applicant was the importance of public safety, as it relates to the city and the role of the City Council to provide public safety. He wondered where he saw it on priorities for the City Council. Mr. Kortlandt said on the priority list, it must be if not the number one, it was pretty darn close to it. He believed both fire and police are the critical areas that people depend on, they cannot provide it themselves, they need someone to do that for them. He said the city is tasked with doing that, so he would say number one priority. Member Staudt said there is something that we agree on. Thank you.

Mr. Smith said he had no further questions, thank you.

Member Heintz said he had no further questions, thank you.

Member Thomas said she had no further questions, thank you.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey felt like she should ask him a further question, but she did not have one, Mr. Kortlandt you were very thorough in your answers in your application. Thank you very much. Mr. Kortlandt thought she was going to ask him what he thought the role of the City Council was. Mayor Pro Tem Casey said she would give him the opportunity to explain. Mr. Kortlandt said one of the big problems he saw with members coming on the Board of Education was they would come on and think that they had a particular power, or right to do certain things. He believed the biggest thought to get across those individuals and council members as well is you are one of a collective seven, you each get a voice, you each get a vote, but together it is the unified vote that really matters. He said once that vote is taken, he may have been the sixth one person that went along with what the function was then what to do. He said we do not get to act independently, we do not get to have our own ideas taken care of, it is the group. Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked him for his answer.

Mayor Fischer thanked Mr. Kortlandt for stepping forward. He also thanked him for his prior service to the City of Novi. He appreciated him coming that evening.

## **8. Stefanie Loring-Boritzki (absent)**

### **9. Aaron Martinez**

Aaron Martinez said he was happy to be before Council tonight as an applicant for the open seat on city council. He didn't believe he was a stranger to most of the members up there. But he did hope to use this opportunity to sort of reintroduce himself. He wears many hats in his life. First and foremost, as a husband and a dad. He and his wife April live here in their hometown where they are raising their son August who turns four months in just a few weeks. He is an attorney by day practicing based in Southfield but

working all across the state of Michigan. This past year, he was given the rare honor of being appointed as one of the youngest Special Assistant attorneys general in the state's history. He was before Council tonight as a friend and as a volunteer who is passionate about seeing the city thrive in its future. He didn't come that evening with the backing of a political organization or party of any kind, but he was there as a former kid from Novi, who grew up to have every opportunity he could ever dream of. If he were given the honor of receiving the appointment that was being considered that evening, he would be one of just two people on the council who know and share that valuable perspective. He believed that the person who filled this vacancy should aim to do a task that sometimes seems daunting. That is to do their very best to unify the city and ensure that the council is unified as well. He didn't believe that there's any one person up there or in the room who had a monopoly on good ideas. He gave his commitment then, that he would make every diligent effort to hear theirs and to look for the ways that they can lift the residents up together, the city faces challenges ahead, like so many other cities. And he thought, throughout the campaign season, for the elephant in the room, he did run. He tried to make it a point to stand on the premise that when Novi residents come together, that there's nothing that they can't accomplish. He believed that that day, and that tomorrow, he looked at the list of the folks who had applied. And he knew the future of the city was in good hands either way. He thanked the Council for their time that evening. And he looked forward to their questions.

Member Smith thanked him for coming out and congratulated him on the birth of his almost four-month-old son. Exciting times. That leads to his question, which is what were his thoughts and what can they do as a city starting, potentially at the next meeting, to make Novi a place that when he is looking to start a family and a career is a place that he can move into? He asked him to review his process of growing up and living in Novi.

Mr. Martinez said he thought it was an important perspective to have, you know, he thought, for himself, when he looked out, and talked to the folks that he went to school with, when he asked them where they want to move to, coming back home to Novi was usually not at the top of their list. For most folks, it had to do with what they perceive as a lack of opportunity. Lack, whether it's the job market, the housing market, things of that sort, He didn't think that there's a shortage of the types of amenities for folks, once they are here, they do a very good job, He thought of taking care of folks sort of throughout their lives from the very youngest to, to the older residents. So, you know, for him, he would want to ensure that he could be an advocate for trying to place make for folks to ensure that they have a diversity of housing options available for folks throughout the span of their lives. And make sure that they continue to keep, not just Novi, but the region as competitive as possible. People see Novi as that place that they can return to have a viable life for themselves and their families, just like he and his wife were doing right now. Thank you, thank you.

Member Heintz said that Mr. Martinez was clearly passionate about Novi. What's the source of that? What was the motor and the passion behind the city? Mr. Martinez thanked him for the question. He said for him, it started well before he was even born,



he looked at the path that his family and his ancestors had taken. A city like Novi was something that they could have only dreamed of. His grandfather completed only an eighth-grade education. His parents were illiterate in both Spanish and English. His other grandparents fled war throughout Europe. And when he thought of the types of places that they dreamed of, and those moments, it checks the boxes that we have here in Novi, we have a community where people want to be involved, they want to be engaged. They have a genuine sense, He thought of looking out for their neighbors. He had heard it that night, folks that are concerned about well, how is my next-door neighbor doing? How is the person across the street doing? How are the families that their kids go to school with? How are they doing? How can we make their lives better. And he those are the types of things that just inspire him to keep going to know that this is a community that is very, very caring. It's very compassionate. It's very intelligent, and it's very resourceful. It's a community that wants to find an innovative way to help the next person. He thought that's so exciting for not just the community today, but for what it can be in the future. He saw that potential; he saw that possibility. That's just genuinely what excited him about Novi every day.

Member Thomas thanked him for coming and applying. She said she had kind of asked some of the same questions to people repeatedly. But she knew that he had talked a lot to people in the community. She asked what was his opinion of the importance of that public engagement? How would he use that in your decision-making processes? Mr. Martinez responded by saying first, he thought was essential. It's paramount. He didn't think the council could do an effective job without that input. He thought some of that work was already being done. When he heard the mayor pro tem's presentation in the last session of the last term of the Council, where focus groups were utilized to help guide the work of the seniors, the older adult needs. That's incredible. That was a direct link that folks can have with the city council before problems begin, or at least he hoped before the problems begin, because he thought they had heard from a number of folks that night that a lot of times what gets people enraged probably and engaged is when something is going wrong. And he thought it did a disservice when they only seem to make those opportunities public at that point. He wanted people to be engaged well before that. He wanted to know what they're thinking about. Well in advance of that, he thought of the survey tool that the City was starting to utilize, he really hoped and encouraged everybody in the room, if they hadn't signed up for that yet, please do so. Because that is data that he thought the council, and the city staff, could use directly to make the decisions that will help the residents in the future and make sure everyone has that opportunity to be heard before problems hopefully arise.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey said good evening. Thank you for stepping up tonight. She thanked him for his interest in seeking appointment. She was going to ask her standing first question, then give him the floor so he could explain to Council what he believed the role of city council was or the involvement level of city council in managing the city? Mr. Martinez said he thought the role of the City Council was to, number one, provide, to find, to look for the folks that have the bright ideas, that have the ability, the wherewithal that they want to bring to the city and give them the resources they need

to do the work and solve the problems that they hear from residents. He didn't think that meant the City Council has its finger on every day-to-day decision and operation that the city has. He thought that is where the residents had their most direct involvement in the process, the residents elect the members of the city council to be their voice and to give them a seat at the table. He thought that was valuable, because then in turn, the city council uses that to help provide direction to the city staff to let them know, okay, this is what they are hearing, how can they go about addressing this? What funding do they need to get this done? How can they make sure they are doing these things cost effectively and within their means? He thought it was a mix of stewardship, he would call it over what the city does, as well as being the people's voice. He said to look at the organizational chart for the city. He had. And you look and you see the residents are on top, you know, the residents are supposed to be where the council derives its authority from and its ability to govern. So he thought they couldn't lose sight of that or understand that. You know, while they may all think that there's a different path, perhaps to get to the solution. He thought everybody there wanted what's best for the city of Novi. And he thought they could all do that collaboratively together.

Mayor Fischer said he had a similar question. If he were to be sitting up there with them in a couple weeks, what would be his one or two concise goals that he would submit and lobby for? Mr. Martinez said that he would give a bigger, larger scale idea and a smaller scale idea. First, the larger scale idea was not one that he would claim credit for. He would like to see the city really start getting the pieces moving forward to having a dedicated department for older adults in the city. He thought just some of the things that they had heard that night and he knew some of the things that those who ran in the last election had a chance to hear firsthand was seniors and older adults in the community, they're looking for help, you know, trying to navigate healthcare. Healthcare gets more and more complicated as one gets older. He thought that was really kind of an eye opening thing that he heard from folks on the campaign trail, whether it's something about connecting the youth to the seniors, that would be a great conduit to being able to do that providing services, perhaps through DPW and in conjunction with the older adults department to be able to help folks who need maybe some shoveling in in the winter times, or perhaps they need help cutting their lawns in the spring and summer times. He thought they could provide sort of a one stop shop for folks for the expanding population in the city. He would really like to support that work moving forward. Secondly, on a smaller scale. He was really moved this past Memorial Day when the trail of honor was imposed or put up at Fuerst Park and in talking to some of the folks on the city staff who were a part of putting that on. He knew the ambition was there to try to do something that's perhaps more permanent. He came from a long line of folks who had served honorably in the military, his dad served in Vietnam. He thought having something like that here in Novi where they can really honor our fallen, but also our veterans, would be an incredible asset to have. He said they had a lot of opportunity there to being able to put something more permanently at Fuerst Park.

Member Staudt said that during the past couple of weeks, he had gotten quite a number of emails from residents who didn't think that they should be having this process that evening. Many of those people supported Mr. Martinez during the election. How

did he reconcile him standing there tonight, applying for the position with a group of people who supported him in the past? Clearly not agreeing with him doing that? Mr. Martinez said that he thought it came from the point of everybody in the city wants to be involved, they want to be engaged. He thought we were able to disagree with one another without being disagreeable. He thought by his standing there that evening, he didn't view it as a slight towards anybody else. He knew that they had a lot of incredible, accomplished individuals who were applying for the seat. And he thought, as he had said, the city is in good hands. No matter who they end up picking, he, of course, felt that he had a perspective that he did offer, which no other applicant had. And that's just the fact that he was a lifelong Novi resident, he came home from the hospital with his parents, he came to Novi and, except for the short time that he went to MSU. , he had never lived anywhere else. Novi, this was his home, and he wanted to make it better. He didn't want to get into any sort of back and forth on him versus any other particular applicant. He wished every single applicant all the best. The city is in great hands. He was going to keep focused on what he thought he could do and what he could offer for the city.

Member Smith began the second round of questions. He said that they had talked a little bit in abstract about community engagement. Mr. Martinez had just been through a practical exercise in community engagement by knocking on people's doors and annoying their dogs. He asked what he had found out when he was talking to people during his campaign? What was their biggest concern? And what would he do to address that? One of the things that really surprised him was about how many folks, despite the fact that they've got the Engage magazine, they've got social media channels, they've got the Novi note where things are put out there, a lot of folks gave feedback that they didn't know this was happening. Or how long has this been going on since they considered a project or a decision that was made at the Council table? He thought, not suggesting that they have folks in the city going out canvassing on a daily basis to get that info out. He said the town crier is probably out of style at this point in time. But he thought that there are probably things that can be done. He was really interested in seeing sort of how the development of the improvements to Studio Novi that had been approved and was under construction right now, how the staff can use that as a way to really try to amplify those efforts to make sure that they are not in a position where the residents don't feel like they're getting the information from the city. He thinks that there's a lot that they can do. He thought the future was going in the right direction to solve that problem.

Member Heintz said he liked how he wrote up the org chart with the residents on top, it was really humbling when it was put that in perspective. He said that the org chart had recently been reviewed with him during a little mini orientation. He said that it was a little more or less the same phrasing as one of the questions he had been asking, but it was just phrased in a different way. That was, basically, that the role on this console was as fiduciaries. They want to make sure that they see the residents' goals, the residents' needs, and just what's best for them above their personal interests. He was just wondering if he cared to kind of comment on how that can be handled with himself knowing that there is going to be a need within the community that might be different

than his personal preference. Mr. Martinez said he thought that was something that had been said at the table a number of times, that when there is a full council, a majority of the votes that you take are seven-zero, and he thought that it was a really positive thing. That meant that the council had done an effective job of zeroing in on what the problem was and how they could address that. They had gotten everybody with all their different experiences and backgrounds around this consensus of yes, this is the way we want to move forward. He thought that is important, consensus is important. But also, if there is a time when, perhaps it's a six-to-one. If he happened to be the one, he would try to make whatever record he could, but only in the interest of trying to help further the work of the city. It is not a game where one packs up their things and goes home when they don't get their way. There are 66,000 residents in the city who depend on the decisions that are made at this table. They have got to leave their egos at the door, himself included. Because they need to make that consensus, they have the job, they have the ability to do really positive things together at the table. He thought that should be the priority. What can be done together to try to get these problems addressed and do so in a fashion where they can hopefully have unanimous approval of the council. That is the clearest mandate the council can give to the city staff. He thought it would show the residents the clear direction that they want to go.

Member Thomas said that she knew that in election season there was a lot of engagement. She said that Member Smith mentioned knocking on doors and waking up people's dogs, or in her case, accidentally waking up their babies, which she was sorry about, she didn't mean it. She said she knew that he had been active but asked that he talk a little bit about when he first considered the possibility of being on Council, and what it took him to get there. Mr. Martinez said that he had seen these meetings play out for a long time. He had been to meetings where David Landry was sitting in the chair, that was probably the earliest that he remembered. He could see the deliberative process and how things get done. He said the sausage getting made is, for most people, probably terrible. He loved it. He loved being able to see the exchange of ideas, the exchange of debates, the convincing that sometimes happens at the table, when somebody feels very strongly, this is how they think it ought to go. But then they hear something from one of their colleagues, and they go, Wait a minute. That makes a lot of sense. Maybe that is how they should do it. He saw that as being something that for himself, that's fulfilling. He said one doesn't go into being a lawyer, being an attorney, without sort of that excitement over trying to persuade. Now, not everything is a persuasion exercise. For him, that was sort of what kind of lit that spark. He loved seeing how the business was done, and to see how a decision was ultimately made. He had that experience back when he was working for the Novi schools. They broadcasted every Board of Education meeting and saw the exact kind of thing play out there, the deliberative process, the facts that people bring, the experiences, you know, what they've heard, and what they've lived. Those are all things that he thought, for himself, he wanted to be a part of that. He wanted to be able to bring his 30 years of living in the city of Novi to the table and hopefully be able to do the work that he thought the residents expected them to do in good faith. Thank you.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey joked about not talking about talk about sausage making. She said that Member Heintz mentioned vegetarianism earlier, and thought she would jump in. She said to Mr. Martinez that there had been a lot of questions that had been asked about understanding public opinion, engaging with the public. She wanted to ask a question that hopefully would bring all of that together. Sometimes the decisions up here are pretty straightforward. There's seven-zero, there's six-one. Council was approving a purchase that had already been budgeted. There were times when decisions were very multifaceted. They're very complex, they impact a large number of people. She said she was going to go several years back and talk about Lakeshore Park. So, they had a lot of conversation at the table about improvements to Lakeshore Park and Lakeshore Park is for the entire city. There are obviously residents that ring Lakeshore Park and there were some concerns, some very justified concerns, that they had about some of these improvements to the park. So how would he balance and evaluate the impact, movements that are intended to apply to the whole city against the impact that would be to a smaller number of residents who may or may not have provided their opinion to Council throughout the process. How would he balance the mass against the needs of the few? Mr. Martinez responded that he thought it started with data, you know, and the decisions where they could have that sort of input where that can guide them, you know, look for the key metrics. Obviously, he was speaking in the abstract, but there are key metrics that he was sure city staff had available that could help guide them to what options are number one, and then he thought they would take those options, and try to look at the greater good, what is this going to provide? How is this going to benefit the city, and try to find that soft spot, that right spot where perhaps everybody comes away, not getting everything that they want, but, you know, some. The folks that maybe came to them later in the process, to use her example, felt that they've been heard, they feel that adjustments were made that make them more comfortable with that process and how it played out. Yet, the goal that the City Council or the city staff maybe came into it with is still largely preserved. He thought that's the goal, right? They want to find that that middle ground where everybody kind of says, Okay, well, this isn't exactly what they wanted, but they can live with it. And I thought by and large, as time goes on, most people, once the emotion of the situation, whatever it may be, kind of wears off, they say, okay, they could see how it made sense. There are going to be some folks that are just never going to be won over on a particular issue. And providing those folks with the opportunity to be heard is important. But making sure that it doesn't derail whatever the goal might be, where they can find that middle ground, that is important.

Member Fischer did not have any other questions and gave the floor to Member Staudt who said that during the campaign trail, he and Mr. Martinez kind of talked cordially during most of it. There was a particular time where they started talking about, we probably share a lot more similarities than differences. What is it that Mr. Martinez really believed, and not talking Member Staudt in general, but talking about Council where he saw differently than what they had done as a group, the past four years, eight years, 10 years, 12 years? Where does he see the difference? Mr. Martinez said that he thought the difference came in terms of what had been touched on where the message got out later for the public on a particular issue, where maybe they didn't

have an opportunity for folks to be involved early on. Now, some folks, he thought, view it as okay, there's a couple things in balance there. What can the City Council actually do? What do they have time on their timeline to be able to accommodate? From his perspective, he didn't want to put words in his mouth. But I think the process that's been utilized by the council is largely one that they are all fairly comfortable with. He thought for folks on the outside, at least from where he stood, he would like to see more of that public input, being able to be a part of the decisions. He called Audience comment, OMA, that's great. But he really wanted to see that feedback from the residents was getting into tangible forms where, he thought some of what had happened recently there had been decisions that the council had made to send things back to the drawing table in response to getting some of that information. But we've gotten to that point. He thought perhaps that should have been something earlier along the way. But again, he thought there was still more that united them than what divided them. He thought that ought to be the objective of whoever fills the seat, to look for what those similarities are and where that consensus is. Because yeah, they may not agree on everything, and that's okay. But he thought that where they could agree, that should be the focus.

Mayor Fischer thanked Mr. Martinez for, even with a small one at home, putting himself on the campaign trail and being willing to serve on this seat. Congratulations again to him and his wife. He wished them all the best. The Mayor said that at that point, his watch had told him to stand up two times, so he asked for counsel to take a five-minute break and reconvene at 9:27pm so they could get a chance to fill their waters or do whatever else needed to be done.

Mayor Fischer called to resume the meeting. He joked that there were 32 more applicants to add for tonight's interviews. Just kidding, just kidding. He then announced candidate number 10, Daniel F. McNamara. The timer was set for two minutes and gave him the floor.

#### **10. Daniel F. McNamara**

Mr. McNamara said good evening and thanked the Council for the opportunity to approach them. He said he thought he was coming in a different way than everything else. He has been a public servant all his life. He was the president of Detroit Firefighters Association and was a Detroit firefighter for 37 years. He has done other parts of service with firefighters, internationally and statewide. He said he has been that guy. He stated that he is president emeritus of the local, he has been the guy that negotiated all the contracts, went through a restructuring, went through bankruptcy, learned how to work with the city, for the citizens and for the members. He learned collaboration and that little bit about walking out of a meeting with little few pebbles in your mouth. It isn't a zero-sum game anymore. He said they had the walls against them. He stated that as a candidate, he can fill those holes. He has a master's in dispute resolution. He knows how to talk to people, how to handshake people. He doesn't want a handshake, he wanted to come up with an agreement that serves everybody. He believed there's a lot of holes that need

to be filled and you must be able to communicate. His wife always told him that he has polite Tourette's, so it goes on and on and on. He thinks having service, having met with cities, having lobbied in the State and in Washington, he has met all the players to city councils in Detroit, not with them and all the rest. He said he had a lot of experience in how to talk, negotiate and collaborate with bodies of government, how to come to consensus, how to figure out answers, how to include the taxpayers. They're the ones that run this little thing. He said he knew one of your questions was about what the City Council does, but they are not anything without the taxpayers. He said just like his membership, they pay dues, and every one of them must be treated equally. One of the big things is finding out how to wait to make sure that they all are included in what Council is doing in a timely manner. He said he is one of those elderly citizens now, he just turned 69. He is just going over his health care and Medicare and all the rest. And there's a lot of questions. He noted that he was on his Homeowners Association where he has been going a lot more. He has been there since 2002, his wife since 1995. He mentioned that his neighbors come to him for answers because they don't know where else to get it. They know he will pursue it. He believed that what he could do is be that council person that can do all the all those things. He can be a complete person. He knows how to read budgets and how to do all that stuff. The timer sounded, ending Mr. McNamara's time.

Mayor Fischer thanked him and directed the first question to be asked by Member Heintz.

Member Heintz thanked him for coming in that evening and for his time. He asked him what passion he identified with the most that would help him in this position. Mr. McNamara responded with the infrastructure of the city and public safety. In his subdivision alone, the fire department just did a tremendous job and stopped a house from being able to burn down. He had police experience; they came into the neighborhood and handled the situation so well that he had to call and tell them thank you. That's important. He commented that people must know they're safe, but it doesn't run just with public safety. As you know, with the whole infrastructure, we must make sure that the City is keeping up with this growth. He mentioned there is a new village being built on Grand River, just to the east. He said there's a lot of inspections, a lot of things that must be done, if they don't get done, it gets shut down. There is only a small budget to work with and this is all inside the budget. He said they have to make sure the Ts are crossed, and the I's are dotted, but as we get older, as seniors, we kind of get lost in the shuffle. One of the ideas he was going to suggest is almost every subdivision has an HOA., he wondered why the City Council doesn't investigate something like meeting with the presidents of the HOAs. He said the HOAs are all on email blasts and everything else. He said they can contact everybody in their neighborhood have their own little meeting and then have our presidents move forward and have a consensus meeting. This is just one example of hearing voices and active listening to be able to hear what they have to say.

Mr. McNamara commented that you are not always going to be a seven-zero vote, you're not going to be a four -three vote, it might be three-four, but people know they have been heard, he felt he was a fact-based, critical thinking person, he tried to avoid all that noise that happens in all of that, but when people know that they have been

heard logically, that goes a long way for the taxpayers of the city, as far as when they support the City Council, and when they support the actions of the government. If they know that, he thought that sometimes they don't. He said he thought the City Council runs a great city politically and governmentally wise. He said he has looked at how to fix things even more, there's a few little suggestions that can be made. He said that he has seen in Novi a lot of communities, Novi has four quadrants, technically, but he didn't know that they're all coordinated to the same kind of thoughts, or if they're all up to speed. One thing he always believed in was that everybody that is a voter is up to the same speed. They don't have to agree with it, they don't have to like it, they can ignore it, they could shut it off, but given the opportunity to know exactly what is being done before moving forward. He thought not do that would be a little bit of a disservice, because of what the City Council does, they listen to the taxpayers, bring in facts and data, forensic audit, then decide what to do? Then they come up with the best decision possible, and someone told him that 50% plus one of the votes is a landslide. So, if they're lucky to get that, then they're happy. Of course, they want more than that. But knowledge is power. He commented the more they get the taxpayers behind you, and more they have their fingers or their octopus out in Lansing legislating, lobbying and all the rest, they have a good control over where they're at, then they're ready to start thinking about tomorrow. He mentioned the old saying, what if a bomb dropped right here right now? Who's taking over? Do we have anything in place? Do we know who those people are? There might be rules, but they must prepare for the eventualities that happen tomorrow. Nobody knew about all the political things that were happening right now like in Israel and Hamas, no one knew that was coming. How do you deal with it?

Mayor Fischer gave the floor to Member Thomas for the next question.

Member Thomas asked his opinion on the importance of public engagement, and in that how that plays a role in the decision-making process. Mr. McNamara said he thought it was crucial, because to include everybody that wants to be included, taxpayers and people bringing in data, they would get the best ability to decide. He explained when they make that decision, people that are involved in a process can understand what was done. They might not like it, they might like it, but they understand it. It's a part of the process, part of the government, right as part of that political pyramid of government, with the residents, the taxpayers. He said his Union had 1000 members and he did everything he could email, personal visits, all the rest, to get everything he could learn. They had a great team of attorneys. They had a great International Union that would get all the facts. He said every time he sat at the table, he wasn't just talking out of his ear. A lot of times he handed them documents that they had signed earlier so that they forgot what they did. He said he had to do all that stuff to have to have a firm foundation. He might have had to take a step back sometime before taking a step forward.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey asked the next question. She thanked Mr. McNamara for coming out that evening and seeking an appointment with the City Council. She said he knew what she was going to ask first. She asked him to explain how he saw the role of the City Council in the government. Mr. McNamara said he thought the City Councilmembers



are the stewards of the city. On one end they take and gather all that information, and they sit there with the best information from many different places. He said then they make solid recommendations, they are the straw that stirs the drink. Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked him for the analogy.

Mayor Fischer said that Mr. McNamara had heard his question as well. If he had the opportunity to be up here with the City Council in a couple of weeks, what would be the number one and two goals that he would submit for the next set of goal setting. Mr. McNamara said he thought that the city and the government were constantly moving. He thought one of the biggest foundations was to have a strategic plan. It is altered every so often when they have a meeting, but everybody must know where they want to be. He felt that first, we need to figure out where we are at. Then where do we want to be? He said that there was so much construction still going on in Novi and there's so many different things going on. He didn't know, sometimes it's a left hand knows what the right hand is doing. He felt that if the taxpayer can see the strategic plan, what is being done, where they're moving, that would help a lot because people are judging where they move just by that kind of stuff. His neighbors, many of the children in his neighborhood live in the sub because of the school system, because it's in the top five of the State. That's the only thing they know, really, about the government, that their kids are going to the best. In fact, one girl is going to work for NASA. That's a tremendous thing that Novi does, it gives them that education, maybe eventually gets them tied into government activities or not. He said if they could start small and give that education to all these kids. The high school is a perfect example of what the City does right.

Mayor Fischer thanked him and gave the floor to Member Staudt to ask his question.

Member Staudt said that Novi has a very unique hybrid fire department that has been very successful for the City for a long time. He commented that it is extremely cost effective and has provided the taxpayers with great value. Coming from a full time Fire Department background, how did he see how Novi's Fire Department functions? Would you support moving forward with this hybrid system? Mr. McNamara said he knew that they had a vote on it at one time, he was at the the City Council meeting when it came up for discussion. When the full timers wanted to make it a full-time department. He prefaced it by saying there are all volunteer fire departments, there's no such thing as an unpaid volunteer, they're paid for paid-on-call, hybrid and full time depending on the needs of the city. He personally believed a full-time staff is the best thing. For example, in his neighborhood, because of the weight and speed, somebody put their fireworks next to their house, right up their house, almost burned the house down. The fire department got there in time and put it out. Those are things he believed in for the safety of people, but that comes from facts. So politically, he knew it might not be favorable, but that's one of those things that needs to be dug into. He said he thought they did a great job. He knew some needs of this city; you don't need anything over 70-foot aerial. He knew they have a very extensive mutual aid system; he would ask how often that mutual aid system worked the way it's designed. He thought they needed to look at the number of incidences you have. He thought the City has pretty good placement of the stations. The

stations also from what he could see with the response time, he said those all come into the equation that need to be looked at.

Member Smith was given the opportunity to ask the next question. He said they are having problems everywhere getting people to work in public safety and retaining them once they find those people. How would he want to address that issue?

Mr. McNamara said that in Novi, even McDonald's was having a problem. They can't hire. What they do now, what a lot of cities are doing, are requiring applicants to have education, an application or education that they must go to school for, they must pay money, and maybe not be able to work like Hazmat, paramedic, or an EMT or something like that. One of the things he suggested they might look at is a budget number, but in-house training on some of those things, or assistance with their getting their education because a lot of them can't come because they're not qualified. If they're qualified, they would put in, because there used to be long lines but with being an all response, fire department, police department all the rest now, you have to know so much. He had the benefit of the fire department coming to him on a medical call one time in his house, and they were tremendous. He didn't know how many people were behind them, they had a lot of different agencies. He thought it's a question more of getting them qualified to join. When he came out in 1977, all you had to be was young and strong and they would train you. They didn't have much to do other than fires for a long time. Now it's totally different. He said that is one suggestion to look at.

Mayor Fischer opened the table to begin a second round of questions. There were none, so he thanked Mr. McNamara for his answers and for submitting to serve the City of Novi. He then said that the next applicant was number 11 Sujata Raman. The timer was set, and she was given the floor to speak.

Mayor Fischer said that was round one, he will start with Member Heintz for the second round of questions.

Member Heintz said he had no further questions.

Member Thomas said she had no further questions.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey told Mr. McNamara he answered all the questions complete, she had no further questions, thank you sir.

Mayor Fischer said he had no further questions at this time.

Member Staudt said he had no further questions.

Member Smith said he had no further questions.

Mayor Fischer thanked Mr. McNamara very much for his answer that evening and thanked him for submitting to serve the City of Novi.

## 11. Sujata Raman

Sujata Raman introduced herself as a 12-year resident of Novi, a mom of two middle schoolers, an attorney, a businesswoman and an advocate. She said that she was the only applicant in this pool that worked to campaign for this position. She spent this year talking to residents about her vision for our city and listening to them about what they wanted. She campaigned on a commitment to a safe Novi, where the fire stations don't sit empty on nights and weekends due to a lack of staffing, a priority that earned her the endorsement of the Novi Professional Firefighters. She campaigned on a vision of a connected Novi where the city works with Oakland County to design and implement the public transit system that the community overwhelmingly voted for in a way that works best for Novi residents. She campaigned on the resolve to secure the necessary funding for the Library, so it can continue to provide the breadth and quality of programming residents rely on. She campaigned for the idea of a local government that reflects the diversity of the City and values the voice voices of all its residents. She stated after nine months of making her case, 5614 Novi residents cast a vote for her. She said 5614 residents also voted for some of you. She said she was having a hard time understanding how those votes are good enough for three candidates, but somehow those same votes don't make it down to the fourth. She mentioned that the city of Troy just found themselves in a similar situation. She said when two weeks after the election, a council member was appointed to another body, which created a vacancy on their city council. She noted the council appointed the next highest vote getter to the open seat. One Troy council member stated, and she quoted, "I think you can understand that asking council to disregard those numbers and what the voters of the city responded with on their ballots is a big ask of us." She thought it was asking to disregard the ballots that were finalized just days ago. Ms. Ramn said the hallmark of her campaign was listening to residents, and she continues to be committed to that goal. You should be too. Thank you.

For questioning, Member Thomas said that she had been asking the same question repeatedly. She would like to understand her opinion on the importance of public engagement, and how that affects the decision-making process. Ms. Raman replied, as just about every other candidate or applicant had stated tonight, it's vitally important. It's the mandate, it is what people expect. She thought that the voice of the residents was the absolute most important thing that we need to consider that they, as a Council, need to consider. She said frankly, there's no louder voice than that of their vote. She thought that by substituting the Council judgment for that of 5614 voters, she thought that was a mistake. She asked if this Council really listened. If they were committed to listening to the voters, which she thought was very important, then then that's something that they really need to consider. Thank you.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey was given the next opportunity to speak, saying good evening and thank you for coming out tonight. She appreciated her interest in seeking an appointment. As everyone knew her first question, she asked Ms. Raman to please explain to us how you see the role of the City Council or the involvement of the City Council and how the City operates. Ms. Raman said that the City Council's job is, first and

foremost, to listen to the residents. She thought that the mandate for the Council should come from the residents, their priorities, the things that residents want to see done. She believed those should be the priorities of Council, as far as running the city, she said direction, setting the priorities, the direction and guiding City staff to implement those priorities.

Mayor Fischer asked If afforded the opportunity to join Council at the table, they would have a goal setting in a couple of weeks. She has probably heard this question before, but in a concise way, he asked Ms. Raman what her one or two top goals would be that she would submit for consideration and lobby her colleagues for. Ms. Raman said that she thought a couple of other people had mentioned it, and it would not come as a surprise but making sure that the City Council is listening to residents, making sure that they are doing everything they can to be transparent. She thought the City should publicize vacancies on boards and commissions. The posting for this opportunity was sent out to emails to every resident in Novi, she had several people reach out to her, asking about it, and yet there are the boards and commissions. Earlier today there were applicants there for consideration for boards and commissions. She couldn't find anything publicized by the City about those openings. She thought that fell short. So that's one thing.

Ms. Raman stated another thing that she had heard consistently, as she had talked to voters around Novi is development. She understood that it's much more complicated than just overdevelopment. She is not anti-development, but she does think that they can be smarter and more responsible in the way that they develop. She thought they need to have environmental priorities in mind when making the plans that we do or make the decisions for development. So those would be two of the biggest things. One of the other things that she thought was important is making sure that we are inclusive, we are making room for everybody in Novi, that we are considering the needs and wants of all the residents. Whether it's high school students or seniors or you know, retired individuals, people that are looking to buy their first home, they need to be deliberate about making sure that they have a place and make room for all people.

Member Staudt said there's a lot of discussion about listening to residents and mandates that they provide to Council. However, he had been sitting there for 16 years and heard many residents on both sides on every issue. At what point do we who do we decide to listen to, to make sure that we're reaching the mandates that are being dictated by residents? Ms. Raman answered that she thought they should listen to all sides, She thought that they listen to residents that come forward, listen to stakeholders, listen to anybody that will talk about the issue. She understood that they can't make everybody happy all the time, so there will be people that will be disappointed. However, she thought it's important that there is thoughtful deliberation, about all the perspectives that are presented. She mentioned she thought it was incredibly important to be transparent. She said it's very important for this Council to explain their decisions, especially when it comes to more contentious decisions where there's a lot of strong feelings on both sides. And the Council is privy to information that the public sometimes isn't, she said that makes a difference. But as much as possible, it's important to explain the decision and give as

much context as possible so that people understand that their voices are being heard. But just because the decision may not be exactly what they want doesn't mean that they're their voices are being disregarded.

Member Smith said that he would ask the same question that he asked Mr. Martinez, because they both were campaigning this summer. What was the issue that she heard most at doors? And what would she plan on doing to address that issue?

She responded that by far, the biggest issue that she had people express concern about was overdevelopment. She is not anti-development, she understood that there are factors at play that the public is not necessarily aware of. However, she thought it's important that they listen to all sides. She thought that they could come up with some creative out-of-the-box solutions. She thinks there's things that they could draw on. The community is a huge asset. Novi has one of the most educated communities in Michigan, and have people that are engineers, we have people that have degrees and things that she doesn't even know. But the point is, is that they're highly educated, and they've got good ideas. They should be talking to residents and getting information or getting ideas and thoughts from them about how to tackle this issue. She said they need to be more open and more out of the box thinking.

Member Heintz said whether it be dietary preferences, or just general interests that might be different than the greater city of Novi residents, when one has the fiduciary responsibility in the city council position to meet the needs of the residents, and prioritize that over your own personal interests? How do you balance that sort of challenge? Mrs. Raman said that what he said earlier, at the beginning, resonated with her, because she is a vegetarian. The rest of her family is not, so she cooks a lot of double meals. Everybody has their own personal feelings on things. Everybody sitting up at that dais has their own personal feelings about things that is not a secret. They wouldn't be human if they didn't have those feelings about things. But she thought that when they are in a leadership position, they must put those aside, they have to be able to separate those from the greater good, and sometimes from what everybody else wants. If there's a majority, if it's a compelling argument for a certain course of action, they would not be doing their duty if they stick to their own idea about what it should be and not consider other possibilities. It's something important for a leader to have, and she believed that she could bring that to council.

Member Thomas said that she knew that she went through some effort to get there. She was wondering if Ms. Raman could give an idea of background of when she first considered the possibility of joining Council and what brought her there tonight. Give the steps, the process she went through? Ms. Raman said that this was her family's third year of campaigning with a candidate in the home. As many know, her husband ran for mayor of this body two years ago. They ran another campaign for him last year for county commission. This year it took some convincing for her kids, to be honest with you, because they're out there with them every single time we're out knocking doors, they are at events, much to her daughter's chagrin, sometimes, but they're there. That is the biggest motivator for her, her kids. She has said that all along. And it's as true now as it has been

the first time that she announced that she wanted to run. One of the other candidates quoted Gandhi "Be the change you want to see in the community. Be the change that you want to see". There are some things that she wants to see changed. She wants her kids to be engaged, to be involved. She wants them to know what's happening in the world around them. The best way to do that is to model that behavior and so, after a long deliberation with them, she decided that this is what she wanted to do. And she put in the work. There are a few members that were campaigning with her this year. They knocked on hundreds of doors, they went to so many events, they did candidate forums. She talked to thousands of voters. At the end of the day, after making her case and putting it all out there, 5614 voters in Novi thought that she deserved to be in one of those seats. So that's why she was there. Thank you.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey said that she was going to ask a question that she had asked earlier as well. She might change the example a little bit. Sometimes, decisions up here at the Dais are straightforward. They are approving the purchase of something that was already budgeted. Other times they're multifaceted, they're very complex. They have situations like the example she used before, Lakeshore Park. She used Beck Road this time because it's similar concept that there is something that is being considered to make an improvement that will benefit the entire city. There are obviously residents that are going to feel the impact more than others. So how do you evaluate the impact of making an improvement for 67,000 people, exaggerating slightly, versus the impact that specifically will happen to those who are adjoining residents. How do you make that determination?

Ms. Raman answered that it was something that came up during the campaign and she had some conversations surrounding this. It's a balancing act, right? You can't make everyone happy all of the time. It is difficult. She would look at all of the available information, she would dig into the data, she would want to ask questions of those that are on either side of the issue, she would want to ask questions, they're all questions of the people that would be providing us with, with the impact studies and with the data about how this would affect the city as a whole, versus the residents that are most closely affected by the decision. She thought it was a balancing act. They have to weigh all of the factors and make the best decision that you can with the information available to you.

Mayor Fischer said that she had mentioned development and over development a couple of times in the answers and talked about kind of promoting smarter development. He asked her to tell him a specific example of something that was approved in the last two or maybe four years and the last councils that have been up here that she would have maybe voted no on or that she would have changed. Ms. Raman said that without having all of the facts behind the developments, she couldn't say for certain how she would have voted, because as she said, the council is privy to information that we don't always have as the general public. As far as specific developments go, the ones that come to mind are City West and the two developments that are proposed on the northern portion of Wixom Road, north of Deerfield and the middle school. City West in particular has been touted as a downtown space, a walkable space. She knew the things that have been said in favor of it, but personally didn't see it. She doesn't think that

it makes sense to try to create a walkable area or walkable district on either side of one of the busiest roads in our city. To her, it doesn't make sense. Now, again, if there's more information that goes into that decision, and to Mayor Pro Tem's point, if you are balancing the good of a few versus the whole. She didn't know if she would change her opinion. But at this point, that's one example that she, knowing what she knows, would vote against.

Member Staudt said that they have heard from a group of excellent Novi residents who have applied for this position. Clearly one of them who was her running mate in the last election. How does she balance the fact that she feels that she should be selected based on the votes, but that Council chose to do a process and allow these other residents to have an opportunity to run for this position? He said that she had mentioned frequently that she came in fourth, she deserved the position. However, there are a bunch of people here who are very, very talented, very experienced, who also think they should have the position. How do you reconcile this? Ms. Raman said that she didn't disagree with the fact that there are some qualified individuals here that have applied for the appointment. However, she would go back to her starting statement, which is that she put in the work to campaign for it. She got the vote of votes of 5614 Novi residents. She was 290 votes short of Councilmember Staudt's vote count. She encouraged many of the people today that spoke today and that have applied to put their name in the hat and put their name on the ballot in two years. She would have no problem with that. She would campaign for some of these people. She agreed, they were excellent candidates. The fact of the matter is that right now, in this instance, they have the strongest voice that you can get and that is 5614 votes. You don't get anything more than that. There's no louder voice from the residents than their vote, and they voted. She said she understood that there's always been a process, but the process has existed, sorry, the other vacancies that have existed because there was a death of a council member, or somebody was elected to a different position. And it was not in the same year as a municipal election. We had no votes, no election results to fall back on. That's not the case this time. We have the will of the voters. She said she was just asking that they respect the will of the voters because that's the basic tenet of why they are all there.

Member Staudt said that five times he has respected the will of the voters and been elected and worked very hard. And he understood. He lost his first election of very close race and he moved on and went to the next election. Frankly, it's time for us to. Council already had the process in place and agreed to go through this process. He said that they all are going to take a look at what's available. And through our own heart. Just like she talked about, we have differences. Council is going to pick who they think is the right candidate. Thank you.

Ms. Raman asked if she could respond to that for one moment? Mayor Fischer allowed her a minute to do so, but after her comment, it would be done and would not become a back and forth. She said with all due respect, she did put in the work. She understood his point, but they disagreed on that. However, again, she pointed to the fact that the election just happened, and there are election results to rely on. By going through the application process, first she disagreed with that decision, but there was nothing she

could do about, that this was where they were. It was still not too late for them to do the right thing, frankly, and respect the will of the 5614 people in Novi that voted for her.

Member Smith did not have any further questions. Member Heintz said that Ms. Raman commented that this is her family's third year involved in a campaign. He equated the campaign process to running a marathon. He ran his first marathon last year and would like to consider it his only marathon. She continues to campaign and to get back up. He was curious, what keeps her moving? What drives her in this process? She said it was her desire to serve her community. She loves this community. They chose this community for various reasons. She is raising her kids here. She wants to be an example to them. She thinks they are living in some times where we're in a place where things are politically kind of crazy. And local government is one place where we can come and agree on so many things, because the issues of public safety, the issues of a fully funded library, so people can utilize the resources there, the issues surrounding green spaces and making sure that we are being assisted as environmentally conscious and sustainable as we can. Those are not divisive issues. They are issues that affect every single resident in the city. And so we have the opportunity to come together. And we may disagree. She said she knows that she and Member Staudt have differences. However, they are all committed to the best Novi that they can possibly have. In that she thinks that they can find a lot of consensus and find a lot of common ground to do good work. That was why she would keep doing what she was doing.

Mayor Fischer thanked her again for coming forward and putting your name on the ballot last time. He said that he has been on the ballot three out of the last six times. And he wouldn't wish three years in a row on any family. She commented that they were going on four because of her husband's reelection campaign. He agreed and said next, we'll move on to candidate number 12.

## **12. Sobha Reddi**

Sobha Reddi introduced herself as a proud resident of Novi for 31 years and her husband Sathi is a Rotarian. They are proud parents of their son; he is an Infantry Officer in the Michigan National Guard and graduated from Novi High School. She said she is a Systems Analyst in the IT profession and has worked in that field for the last 25 years. She works collaboratively with team members and takes on many responsibilities, resolves issues, and implements new processes and projects. Prior to working in the IT profession, she was a teacher at Novi Montessori. She developed a passion for the education system and volunteered for Novi Schools during her son's school years. She said she is passionate about giving back to the city that has given her so much. She said this is such a wonderful city to live in. So comfortable, safe, and the children grow happily. She knows a lot of kids are successful in this town because of the great education system in the city. She is involved in community service. She was elected to the Board of Trustees and a coach of the community outreach team at Novi SV Temple. Through the Temple, she's helped organize major religious celebrations, interfaith programs, and cultural gatherings. She said Diwali is a popular festival and she said they put in a lot of work to make that happen. She said she has worked with many volunteers and members of the community to



organize annual fundraisers and donate and distribute to the back-to-school program. She helped organize the annual walk-a-thon, golf outing, and picnics through SV Temple which raised money for local organizations. She said if given the opportunity, she would like to elevate her service to help the community.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey thanked her for coming out tonight. She asked Mrs. Reddi to explain the role and involvement level of the City Council in how the City operates. Mrs. Reddi said the involvement of the City Council is a big deal to the City. In looking at the City, there is so much balance in having great schools, Police/Fire Department and especially the diversity of the community. This community has so many multi-cultural groups. Having good businesses around, a state-of-the-art hospital and a lot of medical services around, that makes this a special place. The City Council members put in so much work and interact with the community to make this a good place.

Mayor Fischer asked if she was on Council in a few weeks for goal setting, what would your top one or two goals be. Mrs. Reddi said a lot of people work from home because it's a good option. She said sometimes it's hard because of the internet services. Especially if a few people are working from home, it's sometimes complicated to work efficiently. She said it would be a great improvement. She said another benefit would be a coalition between the seniors and the youth. She said coming up with a good program, such as having a gathering together among them and sharing knowledge. The youth can help with technology and the knowledge from the seniors would help the youth learn. They could have some fun events together or even health and education seminars.

Member Staudt said she was a 31-year resident of Novi. He said diversity was at a minimum at that time and we have since become a much more diverse community. We have a diverse group of applicants being considered tonight to join the City Council. He asked what she would do as a City Council member to encourage further diversity through all of City government. Mrs. Reddi said 31 years ago her family was probably the only one in her neighborhood of a different culture and they've built upon that. She said as her son went to school, they made friends and got to know people. Because of the diversity, there are so many different cultures. People do need encouragement to get out of the box and get involved. She said that is something they could do more between neighborhoods, to have the city promote involvement.

Member Smith said in her application she mentioned being interested in helping seniors in the community. He asked what she saw as the primary need of seniors and how can the City address that. Mrs. Reddi said when there are weather conditions, like snow, it is something we could come together as a community and help people who are in need. She wanted to involve the youth in any way to share the knowledge and build a strong relationship with the neighborhoods.

Member Heintz said she answered his question about what she is passionate about and she is passionate about giving back to the community. He asked her to expand upon that. Mrs. Reddi said knowledge sharing. She said she works a lot at SV Temple, and she

sees the youth coming in wanting to volunteer at the Temple. She said there are opportunities to volunteer there, but she thought they could come up with better programs where they can come and help around the neighborhoods and within the city to give them an opportunity to learn more.

Member Thomas asked what her opinion on the importance of public engagement is and how that would affect your decision-making process. Mrs. Reddi said public engagement is critical in making the city a great place to live. She said it's a tough job for the Council because there are so many ideas and taking all the input and making a good judgement. People's involvement in making decisions is a hard job for the Council and we appreciate your hard work. She agreed it's critical to have interaction between people and Council to have positive progress in the City.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey asked her to expand on something in her application where she mentioned it was important to maintain a balance when it comes to the growth and development of residential, commercial, manufacturing, industrial, and retail. She asked her to expand on any ideas she had about that. Mrs. Reddi said we have great residents and education system, and the business and manufacturing are also important to be economically strong. She said having beautiful green parks and recreation to support all that they do need a good balance between the taxpayers and the businesses that help build our roads. She said we do a great job in this city.

Mayor Fischer said he had no further questions.

Member Staudt said he had no further questions.

Member Smith said he had no further questions.

Member Heintz said he had no further questions.

Member Smith said she had no further questions.

### **13. Salene Riggins**

Salene Riggins thanked Council for the opportunity and introduced herself. She said in her 10 years of working and living in Novi, she has come to appreciate the unique character and potential of our community. As a small business owner and active participant in local initiatives, she witnessed firsthand the vibrancy and diversity that defines Novi. She said her motivation to join the City Council is rooted in a profound commitment to secure and contribute to the continued growth and prosperity of our city. She said her professional background in business, Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services, sales management and district training management has equipped her with the skills necessary to navigate the challenges and opportunities that face our community. She said throughout her involvement as Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services and on the Older Adult Services Advisory Board, she's gained valuable insights into the pressing issues that concern our residents. From economic

development to community engagement, she is dedicated to addressing the various needs of Novi. She said she hoped to convey her qualifications and her passion for working with the community. She said Novi is more than a city to her, it's a community that she is proud to live, work, and enjoy nature, nurture, Novi. She said by choosing her, they would be selecting a person deeply committed to representing the diverse needs and aspirations of Novi residents. She thanked them for considering her application and she was excited about the opportunity to serve the community by serving on the City Council.

Mayor Fischer asked if she was on Council in a few weeks for goal setting, what would your top one or two goals be. Ms. Riggins said her goal would be for older adult affordable housing. She said the reason was because of our older adults, the housing for them is very expensive even with senior living facilities. A lot of times, they are getting priced out of Novi.

Member Staudt said he started as a Parks and Recreation Commissioner like her. He said he had a very specific reason why he wanted to get involved in City government. It led from being a Parks Commissioner to City Council for many years. He asked her what prompted her to join the Parks and Recreation Commission. Ms. Riggins said she wanted more inclusivity and she wanted to be the change. She applied to be on the Parks and Recreation Commission, and she loves it dearly. She said she's been on a lot of different boards and committees such as Walkable Novi and the Grants Committee. She started with Parks and Recreation so she could gauge how she liked everything and learn more about the processes. She said she has been on the Commission since 2019 and she's learned a great deal. She said she's ready to contribute more to the City Council.

Member Smith asked about her time on Walkable Novi and what areas she thought the need to focus on moving forward to improve walkability, non-motorized transit and tying into non-personal car transit. Ms. Riggins said having something set up for people to walk more, like more sidewalks in areas we don't have them yet. People would be able to ride bikes and take walks. She said we are already doing it, but it will take a while.

Member Heintz asked how she handles the give and take of having your own personal interests and having to set them aside to prioritize the city's needs and the resident's needs if they differ from your own. Ms. Riggins said she had an example from serving on the Parks and Recreation Commission. She said they had to decide on the ITC conceptual plan. There were 3 different sketches that were given to them and one of them had a pond that she was in favor of. Through their talks, she learned it was less expensive and they talked through everything. She put her personal preference aside and they went with a less expensive option.

Member Thomas asked what her opinion on the importance of public engagement is and how that would affect your decision-making process. Ms. Riggins said her opinion on public engagement was that it's extremely important. You do need to listen to the residents and that's by qualitative or quantitative data which leads and drives your

decision as far as what the citizens are saying they want and need and prioritizing that with what we can do.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey asked her to explain how she sees the role of the City Council and what level of involvement the City Council should have in the operation of the city. Ms. Riggins said she knows the City Council sometimes makes policies, approves the budget, makes decisions on land-based uses, and they want to listen to the residents to guide them in making those decisions.

Mayor Fischer said he had no further questions.

Member Staudt confirmed she got on the Parks and Recreation Commission in 2019. He asked whether, during the process of applying and getting appointed, did anyone ever ask her political affiliation, or were you selected because of your qualifications. Ms. Riggins said no one asked her about political affiliations. She said the process was like this where she interviewed with City Council and that was it.

Member Smith said in her application, she spoke about a sustainability committee to look at green initiatives. He asked if she would support the creation of that committee. Ms. Riggins said she would support that.

Member Heintz said he had no further questions.

Member Thomas said she had no further questions.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey said in her application she mentioned that she wanted to make tangible improvements in the areas of community development, transparency, sustainability, and economic vitality. She asked if she could give some further insight into what type of tangible improvement, you'd like to see in one of those spaces. Ms. Riggins said her passion is older adult services. She'd like to get a community center for older adults and that's one of her main goals. She's very passionate about it and hopes to achieve it.

#### **14. Chester W. "Chef" Roaden**

Mayor Fischer said Mr. Roaden had been present up until the break but wasn't able to stay for the rest of the meeting.

#### **15. Yerko Sepulveda**

Yerko Sepulveda introduced himself and said he's lived in Novi for 22 years with his wife, 4 kids and a cat. He immigrated from Australia in 2001 and had been a U.S. citizen for the last 4 years. He said he's enjoyed learning about the governmental process and although he doesn't have any experience in local government, he was excited for the opportunity to participate. He said he worked as a sales engineer at a company that was headquartered in Novi. He said being in sales taught him the value of listening to

customers, paying attention to detail, and always doing the right thing. He took on a different challenge by starting his own business in 2015, which was the culmination of a long-held dream. He said they raised funds through Kickstarter, fulfilled their obligations and have grown from strength to strength. He said he was proud to say their product shares the stage with some of the biggest artists in the world. He previously served on a board of trustees at a local church where his responsibilities were counting and depositing the offerings, budgeting, and financial accountability. He said his hope for Novi was to improve the quality of life for all residents by making Novi more walkable and bikeable, preserving woodland and wetland areas, and adding educational nature trails, providing continued support and resources for our first responders, and he would love to see Novi become a destination for the performing arts. He said he expects to bring his values, work ethic, experience, and expertise to the benefit of the residents of Novi.

Member Staudt said he saw an interesting comment in his questionnaire. It said he would take those actions necessary to rise from a good place to live to a great place to live. He asked what makes us good but not great already. Mr. Sepulveda said Novi is a fantastic place to live. He said there are improvements that could be made. He said infrastructure, the roads were horrific during the summer. He said the electrical grid is a challenge and having power go out often in an issue. He said he knows things are being worked on. He said those are things that would elevate Novi to a "great" status.

Member Smith said he saw on his questionnaire that he enjoys taking walks around the Walled Lake area for inspiration. How would you improve the walkability in that specific area. Mr. Sepulveda said Pavilion and Lakeshore Park are fantastic and beautiful. He said they've raised their kids in that area, they've played on the playgrounds there and it's wonderful. He said he would love to see a pathway on the west side of Walled Lake that would connect South Lake to the Blomfield subdivision. It's a beautiful area with a lot of natural features. Just linking some of the pathways and using the natural resources we have would be outstanding.

Member Heintz said it was noteworthy that he put on his application that he's voted in every election cycle since being able to, with great interest. He appreciated his dedication and interest in this process. He asked with his interest in the election process and getting involved in local politics, where did that stem from? Mr. Sepulveda said this is where we make an impact as people. It's a lot harder to make an impact at a larger level, like Federal, but this is where we live. We chose to live here and chose to live with each other, and this is where we make the biggest impact, not just on ourselves, but on our children.

Member Thomas asked what her opinion on the importance of public engagement is and how that would affect your decision-making process. Mr. Sepulveda said it's critical. On council, you are here to serve the voters and you are servant leaders. You are people that are elected to represent the people in the city. Listening to the residents is paramount.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey asked him to explain how he sees the role of the City Council and what level of involvement City Council should have in the operation of the city. Mr. Sepulveda said they represent the voters, and you make decisions for various parts of the city to move forward.

Mayor Fischer asked if he was on Council in a few weeks for goal setting, what would your top one or two goals be. Mr. Sepulveda said infrastructure, roads, electricity, internet, access to the parks and walking trails. He said he would love to see more walking trails. We have a wonderful City with a lot of natural habitats, and he thought it would be fantastic to educate people on the animals and plants that are out there. He thought there was an opportunity to do that with what we have existing in the city.

Member Staudt said he had a lot of enthusiasm for our City and it would be welcome in many places.

Member Smith said he had no further questions.

Member Heintz said he had no further questions.

Member Thomas said he mentioned the internet as a goal in one of his responses. She asked him to expand on that. Mr. Sepulveda said there aren't a lot of choices for internet usage. He said Starlink was an option for quick internet access. He said he's struggled with internet access and speed where he lives. He works from home and it's as valuable as any other utility.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey said in his application he referenced his excitement in seeing the growth of the international community in Novi and how you provide a unique perspective on their experience with the city. Are there any thoughts you can share with us about what that experience might be. Are there things the city should be doing differently? Mr. Sepulveda said he thinks the city has done a fantastic job of including lots of different cultures and it's fantastic.

Mayor Fischer wanted to comment on how he put in his application that local politics having the most impact on people's lives and he agreed and said that's why he's here, too. He said if this doesn't work out for you, we'd love to have you in many places with your enthusiasm and knowledge.

## **16. Ramesh C. Verma**

Ramesh Verma introduced himself and explained he has lived in Novi for 45 years and has seen this city grow from 5,000 to 66,000+ and we have a mixed ethnic population who take an active part in the boards and commissions but not on the Council yet. He said he was on Council in the past. He said he volunteered for city activities, like the Library Board and others. In addition to the state and city, he served his Indian community in the Festival of India as the secretary, the vice secretary, and the vice president. He said they still celebrate with the India League of America in August for World Independence

Day. He was the chairman and the vice president for that. He said he stood before them with a request to give him an opportunity to serve the community as a Councilman. He thanked them for their time.

Member Smith said in his application he mentioned some of your goals would be Beck and Ten Mile Road improvements and improving senior services. He asked if he considered our current goal setting process to be adequate to deal with long-term projects like those. Mr. Verma said 10 Mile and Beck Road are already in the planning process. He said people had mixed feelings about widening those roads, but he saw Haggerty Road had been widened and people are still living there. The connection on Beck Road needs to be there and 10 Mile also because of too much traffic coming from the west. He said regarding senior services, it is not only for the community. We have a demographic change in our city with almost 30% from Korea, Japan, China, India, Pakistan. We have to listen to those people. He thought when they next meet for goal session, he would request administration to invite people from ethnic groups so they can listen. They all have different cultures and different needs.

Member Heintz said he brought up an important point about listening to all groups regardless of if they are going to be most of the opinion. He asked how we balance that and listen to a variety of different voices. Mr. Verma said if you invite them, we can learn what their needs are and incorporate those needs in the planning process.

Member Thomas asked him to expand on that a little bit. You're talking about going out to minority communities and she agreed with that. She explained that on the Older Adult Needs Committee, they created focus groups, and they were lacking diversity. She asked what he would do differently to try to make sure we're getting to all those groups. Mr. Verma said he couldn't do it and Council cannot do it. He said the administration needs to invite them. We must invite the different cultures since we have almost 30% of our population from different cultures.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey said it was hard for her to ask the question about the role of the City Council and the operations of the city because he's been on Council before. She asked why he was interested in coming back. Mr. Verma said he is retired, and it is in his blood to do the volunteer work. He said he has put in 35 years as a volunteer for the state and the city and he is still working as a volunteer. He said it's his passion to volunteer and do something for the community.

Mayor Fischer asked if he was sitting on Council, what one or two goals would he submit to his colleagues to lobby and support. Mr. Verma said he does not have big goals for the term. He said his main goal is to take care of Beck Road, Ten Mile and take care of the seniors. He said our seniors need more facilities because we have more seniors now than 20-30 years ago. They are looking for single level houses and we don't have many of those. He said his goal is to work on Ten Mile, Beck Road, and seniors.

Member Staudt said there are two gentlemen in Novi that represented diversity in the early days, and one was Dr. Sanghvi and the other is Mr. Verma. He said Mr. Verma has

been in every position imaginable, but he wants to know what he learned during his time on Council and how you would apply for it if you were appointed. Mr. Verma said he wants to applaud the city workers. They are the super people who work for us. He said he learned that there is a budget and contingency. The project manager should have the authority to use the contingency when they need it. He said he was surprised that some Council members said the project manager must come back to Council for approval to use that contingency. The project manager needed to use it immediately and not wait 15 days. He said that made him feel they didn't believe in our staff. We must believe in our staff, we have an excellent staff, and we need to believe in them. You can question it, but don't tie their hands.

Member Smith said he had no further questions.

Member Heintz said he had no further questions.

Member Thomas said she had no further questions.

Mayor Pro Tem Casey said she had no further questions.

Mayor Fischer said he had no further questions.

Member Staudt thanked him for staying, good night.

**PRESENTATIONS: None**

**MANAGER/STAFF REPORT: None**

**ATTORNEY REPORT: None**

**AUDIENCE COMMENTS:**

Atasi Bagchi, 45113 Bartlett, Novi said she is a 22-year resident of Novi and she loves this city, we have amazing schools and she's met amazing people. She was there because she cares about the city. She said she reached out to Council via the portal and individual emails but unfortunately did not get the privilege of a response from anyone. She said others have shared the responses they received and the gist of them was that some Council members felt that "their" voters would not want the candidate who received the fourth highest votes to be seated. Due to the results of the Mayoral election, there were essentially four seats that were open, and I believe that the citizens voter for four people as an elected official. She believed their duty and responsibility is to serve the will of the constituents, all of the constituents, not just the ones that you presume have voted for you. She said she knew that over 5,600 of her neighbors, friends, and fellow residents cast votes for Sujata Raman. She received the fourth highest vote count on November 7<sup>th</sup>. She did not hear anything this evening from any candidate that in her mind, superseded the will of 5,600 voters. She said if you cannot come to a consensus on



a candidate, she understood there will be a special election which she thought was a complete waste of our communities' resources. She said in her messages, she asked what the Council member's criteria was for this interview process. She mentioned she didn't receive the courtesy of a response and in her mind that was not a transparent way to conduct city business. She said she was really disappointed that members of the Council believe their opinion on who should be seated on Council outweighs the will of the actual voters.

Rod Schlessman, 100 Pleasant Cove Dr. said he's been a resident since 1981. He said there were many excellent candidates that participated in applying for appointment and he had no grudge against any of them. He said only two of the applicants ran for a seat in the election. No one voted "no" for any candidate and both received a significant number of votes. He said that should be one consideration. He said all 16 applicants could have run for election, but only 2 did. He asked if anyone wondered why those 14 did not campaign because he did. He said it indicated to him that 2 applicants were truly interested in the open position.

Belina Smith-Brock, 25007 Meadowbrook Road said Meadowbrook Commons is a beautiful senior community. She moved there in 2021. The landlord of the property is the City of Novi. She said she gets along well with her neighbors and the community staff. She said the City Council approved a contract in January 2023 to have Weather Seal Home Improvement replace all windows and door walls in the entire complex. The work being done has been a huge, long, drawn out, tedious project. The work began in early October and continues to this day. She said her neighbors and her have shared complaints on how the workmanship has impacted residents adversely. She read the contract and felt there were discrepancies in the contract and the work being done. She sends an email on November 6<sup>th</sup> to the community manager regarding the quality of work being done. She followed up with a written complaint and checked to see if a permit was pulled. There was no permit on file, but she didn't know about state, local, and city municipal laws. She left a folder with information with the City Clerk.

Brenda Anderson, 30680 Vine Ct., Novi said she checked with the City Clerk's Office and found out there were 46,000 registered voters. She said in the most recent election there was about a 25% turnout. Of that, 5,614 is 47% of the turnout. She said she was getting the sense that public engagement has some importance and that it should play a role in decision making. She said she hoped that is something that is applied, not just expected of a future member. She said it's the principal. She said it would be the exact same if Ms. Raman was the third highest and Member Staudt was the fourth highest. She said if the mayor had resigned his position to run for mayor, they would have had the option to select four. She felt that's what we did do because he did get elected and that created this vacancy. She said they should listen to the people who voted 34 days ago in the same election that elected them. She said if they really aren't going to listen to people who have civically engaged in the decision because there is a process. She didn't see in the process where they toss out what the people just voted for. She said if you're not going to listen, you're raising expectations that you're going to.

**CONSENT AGENDA REMOVALS AND APPROVALS:**

**CM 23-12-150          Moved by Thomas, seconded by Casey; MOTION CARRIED: 6-0**

**To approve the Consent Agenda as amended.**

- A. Approve Minutes of:  
November 20, 2023 - Regular Meeting (Amended)  
  
November 27, 2023 - Regular Meeting
- B. Approval to purchase radio equipment for the Fire Department through Motorola for \$38,579.80, the approved vendor for Oakland County, for the P25 Radio Replacement Project and amend the budget.
- C. Approval of a Storm Drainage Facility Maintenance Easement Agreement from Fox Detroit Properties LLC for Jaguar-Land Rover car dealership located south of Grand River Avenue and west of Meadowbrook Road (parcel 50-22-23-251-025).
- D. Approval to Adopt Interlocal Agreement for I.T. Services between Oakland County and the City of Novi.
- E. Enter Executive Session immediately following the regular meeting of December 11, 2023, in the Council Annex for confidential written communication for legal counsel.
- F. Approval of claims and warrants – Warrant 1145

**Roll call vote on CM 23-12-150**

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

**MATTERS FOR COUNCIL ACTION:**

1. **Approval of the updated deficit elimination plan for the Capital Improvement Fund (CIP) as of June 30, 2023.**

**CM 23-12-151          Moved by Smith, seconded by Thomas: MOTION CARRIED: 6-0**

**Approval of the updated deficit elimination plan for the Capital Improvement Fund (CIP) as of June 30, 2023.**

**Roll call vote on CM 23-12-151**

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

- 2. Consideration of approval to purchase one (1) 2025 International Single-axle RDS Truck from Tri-county International through the State of Michigan MiDeal cooperative purchasing contract; and upfits to be completed by Truck and Trailer Specialties through the City of Rochester Hills RFP contract, in the amount of \$300,787.02.**

**CM 23-12-152            Moved by Thomas, seconded by Casey: MOTION CARRIED: 6-0**

**Approval to purchase one (1) 2025 International Single-axle RDS Truck from Tri-county International through the State of Michigan MiDeal cooperative purchasing contract; and upfits to be completed by Truck and Trailer Specialties through the City of Rochester Hills RFP contract, in the amount of \$300,787.02.**

**Roll call vote on CM 23-12-152**

**Yeas: Fischer, Casey, Smith  
Nays: Heintz, Staudt, Thomas**

**AUDIENCE COMMENT: None**

**COMMITTEE REPORTS: None**

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL ISSUES:**

**ADJOURNMENT** – There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 P.M.

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Cortney Hanson, City Clerk

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Justin Fischer, Mayor

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Transcribed by Deborah S. Aubry

Date approved: December 18, 2023