

## **SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES**

**July 17, 2023**

**Elected Officials Present:** Mayor Burns, Ald. Anaïs Bowring, Ald. Mike Bruno, Ald. Becky Hruby, Ald. Dean Kilburg, Ald. Craig Maladra, Ald. Martha Paschke, Ald. Robert Swanson, City Clerk Vicki Kellick

**Elected Officials Absent:** Ald. Brad Kosirog, Ald. Richard Marks, Ald. Amy Mayer

**Others Present:** Admin. Stephanie Dawkins, Assistant Admin. Ben McCready, Attny. Ron Sandack

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Burns called the special meeting to order in City Hall Council Chambers at 7:56 pm noting all were present save for Ald. Kosirog, Ald. Marks, and Ald. Mayer.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT / NEW BUSINESS**

None.

### **ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

#### **Discussion Regarding Governance Principles and Practices**

Mayor Burns noted that the City of Geneva Code of Conduct has been visible in the Chamber since 2006 and was crafted by the Council. He suggested a broad discussion of the Code so that during the November goals and objectives workshop, the alderpersons and Mayor could craft a renewed document to which each would affix their signature. Admin. Dawkins handed out copies of the Code to those present.

Mayor Burns commented that although three Council members were absent, there is no good time to hold this discussion, especially because of summer plans. He also noted that immersive issues are coming before the City Council, Committee of the Whole, and other bodies; as such, it is best to discuss the Code of Conduct sooner rather than later. The Mayor noted that all three absent alderpersons were contacted about the meeting and that he will meet with them individually after the meeting so that each knows what was discussed.

The Mayor commented that there are occasionally blurred lines during meetings and that it was important to have a refresher as to how Council members should act with each other and with the public in light of the Code of Conduct.

Discussion centered on public comments and the fact that public comments are not public debate. Mayor Burns noted that this is part of the Code and State statute. Attny. Sandack commented that public comment is for the public and does not include a matter before the Council upon which legislative action will be taken. He noted that making comments on a matter not before the Council could result in liability and should not be interactive at that point. Mayor Burns noted that during recent public comments, he allowed Admin. Dawkins to correct the record based on a speaker's comments. He noted that the Council can overrule the Chair at any time.

Mayor Burns recommended that language be added to the agendas stating that public comment is just that and not public debate. Attny. Sandack noted that there is another community that has placed an asterisk after the "public comment" section of its agenda to let people know that this is a time solely for public comment and that it is not a dialogue or debate. He noted that he could supply such wording for review by the Council. Discussion additionally provided another recommendation to clarify the Code stating that personal comments as well as other signifiers to members of the public should be avoided.

Discussion also took place regarding Council members not stating a public opinion on an issue before that issue comes before City Council for a vote. While Council members are often passionate about various topics, discussion centered on Council members remaining objective on issues. It was suggested that this be included in the Code. Additionally, it was suggested that wording regarding Council member conduct in public also be added to the Code.

Mayor Burns requested that thoughts or comments regarding revising the Code of Conduct could be submitted to Admin. Dawkins.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion by Ald. Swanson, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 9:08 pm.

*- submitted by City Clerk Vicki Kellick*

---