

**CITY OF WEBSTER GROVES
January 16, 2024**

The City Council met this date in a regular session, in the City Council Chambers, which was available to the public in person, and virtually, at 7:32 p.m.

Present at Roll Call: Mayor Laura Arnold
Councilmember Pam Bliss
Councilmember David Franklin
Councilmember Emerson Smith
Councilmember Karen D. Alexander (Zoom)
Councilmember Sarah Richardson
Councilmember Emily Hixson Shepherd

A quorum was present.

Also present: Dr. Marie Peoples, City Manager
Neil Bruntrager, City Attorney
Ms. Katie Nakazono, City Clerk

REMARKS FROM THE COMMUNITY AND VISITORS

- Dave Buck, 124 S. Elm. (See Exhibit A)

**NEW BUSINESS - MAYOR, COUNCILMEMBERS, CITY ATTORNEY,
CITY MANAGER**

No new business.

NEW BUSINESS

Designation of Karen Rangel as Deputy City Clerk

A motion was made by Councilmember Hixson Shepherd, seconded by Councilmember Richardson, to designate Karen Rangel as Deputy City Clerk.

Mayor Arnold called for the vote.

MEMBERS VOTING:

AYES: BLISS, FRANKLIN, SMITH, ALEXANDER, RICHARDSON, HIXSON
SHEPHERD, ARNOLD

NOES: NONE

Mayor Arnold stated that Karen Rangel's designation as Deputy City Clerk was approved.

Bill #9243 – First & Second Reading

Councilmember Bliss introduced **BILL #9243 - AN ORDINANCE LEVYING THE COST OF ABATING CERTAIN NUISANCES (REMOVAL OF GRASS, WEEDS, AND LIMBS, ETC.) AS SPECIAL TAX BILLS AGAINST THE PROPERTIES HEREINAFTER DESCRIBED AND CONSTITUTING LEVIES AS LIENS ON THE RESPECTIVE PROPERTIES**, and at the Councilmember's request, the Bill was read twice, first and second times by title only, and placed on the agenda for future consideration of the Council.

Bill #9244 – First, Second and Third Reading

Councilmember Franklin introduced **Bill #9244 - ENTITLED AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE SUBMISSION TO THE QUALIFIED VOTERS OF THE CITY OF WEBSTER GROVES OF AMENDMENTS TO THE CHARTER OF THE CITY, ALL OF WHICH SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE ELECTORS AT THE GENERAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION ON APRIL 2, 2024, AND PROPOSING AMENDMENTS TO THE PREAMBLE, AND SECTIONS 2.12, 5.6, 5.18(2) 7.6, 7.12, 9.2, 10.3, 13.4 AND 14.9, AND REPEALING ORDINANCE #9241**, and at the Councilmember’s request, the Bill was read twice, first and second times by title only, and placed on the agenda for future consideration of the Council.

A motion was made by the Councilmember Franklin, seconded by Councilmember Richardson, to conduct the Third Reading of Bill #9244 this evening, due to the compelling reason that this Bill needs to be approved to meet the election submittal deadline.

Mayor Arnold called for the vote on conducting the Third Reading this evening due to the above compelling reason.

MEMBERS VOTING:

AYES: FRANKLIN, SMITH, ALEXANDER, RICHARDSON, HIXSON SHEPHERD, ARNOLD, BLISS

NOES: NONE

Mayor Arnold stated that the Third Reading of Bill #9244 will be conducted this evening.

The Third Reading of Bill #9244 was taken up, and the Bill was read for the third time and placed upon its passage to become Ordinance #9244.

Mayor Arnold called for the vote on Bill #9244

MEMBERS VOTING:

AYES: SMITH, ALEXANDER, RICHARDSON, HIXSON SHEPHERD, ARNOLD, BLISS, FRANKLIN

NOES: NONE

Mayor Arnold stated that the Bill 9244 was approved.

CONSENT AGENDA

A motion was made by Councilmember Smith, seconded by Councilmember Richardson to approve the Consent Agenda.

Mayor Arnold called for the vote on the Consent Agenda.

MEMBERS VOTING:

AYES: ALEXANDER, RICHARDSON, HIXSON SHEPHERD, ARNOLD, BLISS, FRANKLIN, SMITH

NOES: NONE

Mayor Arnold stated that the Consent Agenda was approved.

The following Consent Agenda was approved:

- **Approval of Minutes** – January 2, 2024
- **Resolution #2024-04** –Approval of a Resolution Amending the Budget for Fiscal Year 2024

- **Liquor License** — Approval of Liquor License Application by Elias Productions LLC, d/b/a 23 W Coffee, 23 W Lockwood Avenue, to Sell Liquor by the Drink for Consumption on the Premises Where Sold and on Sundays

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

No new appointments.

EXECUTIVE (CLOSED) SESSION

Councilmember Bliss made a motion, which was seconded by Councilmember Richardson to go into Executive Closed Session per Attorney-Client Privileged Communications with [MO. Statute 610.021([17])].

Mayor Arnold called for the vote to go into Executive (Closed) Session.

AYES: RICHARDSON, HIXSON SHEPHERD, ARNOLD, BLISS, FRANKLIN, SMITH, ALEXANDER,


NOES: NONE

Mayor Arnold stated that the Council would go into Executive (Closed) Session.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the City Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:24 p.m. on motion of the Mayor, duly seconded.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 6th day of FEBRUARY 2024.



 Mayor



 City Clerk

Dave Buck's "Remarks from the Community & Visitors" at 1/16/24 Webster Groves City Council Meeting

Yesterday's National MLK Holiday reminded me of this revelatory quote by Dr. King: **"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends"**. This quote has a definite meaning for a significant number of long-time Black residents in the North Webster Neighborhood, as they have each shared individually in conversations with me as recently as today.

First, Webster's own MLK community event has not been held in four straight years. In 2021 & 2022, it was due to COVID. But in 2023 and this year, 2024, it was due to what has been explained to me by a leading Webster pastor as a shared "lack of interest and leadership" by the city, school district and clergy.

This sends a terrible message, especially to our Black community. To them, the silence of our friends is deafening and why I am happy to organize the return of the event in 2025.

Second, the long-term steep decline of Webster's Black population and Black owned & operated businesses is irrefutable and tragic - but not hopeless - and is correctable with long-term focus, priority and commitment.

In your strategic plan, "People" is your #1 Value and states that all people are **"valued, respected and supported."**

This unfortunately is not what my friends believe anymore, given that Blacks are moving out of Webster due to the **loss of affordability, loss of dignity, loss of trust, and the loss of their “tribe” and their cultural identity.** To them, the silence of our friends is deafening.

So, what can City Council DO about it, before it is too late and we become **“White Webster”?**

Here’s three ideas: take the currently **unassigned \$95,000 balance of the Special Initiatives Fund** and begin by either:

1. Creating a new ad campaign targeted to **attract new Black families to Webster to rebuild our Black population.**

Or:

2. In our unofficial **City of the Arts**, creating new events that specifically showcase, appreciate & celebrate our community’s **Black Artists** & their amazing talents in the **fine arts, music, theater and literature.**

Or:

3. Learning from, leveraging and extending the school district’s **highly successful Thrive Program to develop the next generation of Black business entrepreneurs.** My bet is that Lee Moss & others could be persuaded to return to Webster as mentors.

May the silence of our friends toward Webster's Black community end once and for all. It's time to act boldly and restore what they have lost. I know you can do it. Correct that – You **MUST** do it or risk losing our Black community forever. I do not want to lose my Black friends but they will likely be gone in 5 years or less if Webster does nothing and allows the downward trend to continue.

Thank YOU!