

**CITY OF WEBSTER GROVES**  
**February 16, 2022**

The City Council met this date in a regular session, in the City Council Chambers, which was available to the public via teleconference, at 7:38 p.m.

Present at Roll Call: Mayor Gerry Welch  
Councilmember Laura Arnold  
Councilmember Pam Bliss  
Councilmember David Franklin  
Councilmember Emerson Smith

Absent at Roll Call: Councilmember Karen D. Alexander  
Councilmember Sarah Richardson

A quorum was present.

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

**REMARKS OF VISITORS**

Councilmember Emerson Smith read a statement [See Exhibit A].

Councilmember Arnold stated that she wanted to follow up on one thing. In terms of the DEI study and the Compensation and Classification study, those have been critical pieces of information for us to get in the last year. Especially as we go into a new collective bargaining agreement with the firefighters and really figure out how we can retain employees salary wise. Also, because our community has made it clear that we believe in DEI and this is the starting point for us as a city to do that. So, I just wanted to take a minute and thank our staff because they invested significant time on those projects and I wanted to assure them that from my perspective that was time well spent.

Sebastian Bellomo, 118 Summit, stated that he extracted budget data and created a spreadsheet of revenues and expenditures for FY 2012-2022. In all those years the budgets adopted by Council show general fund expenditures exceeding revenues. I understand the same is true for 2002-2011. The general fund was balanced by transfers in from other funds and dipping into reserves. There is no question that the city's financial situation is dire. Reserves are receding. Expenditures for wages and benefits are about 76% and a big piece of it is public safety. I served on the Council from 2016 to 2020 and accept responsibility for the situation and my fiduciary responsibility because I did not push hard enough to make changes to the budget format. Perhaps some of the impending problems would have surfaced. I know there is no easy solution and the Council and City Manager have a tough and unpleasant problem, raise new revenues, reduce the size of the workforce, or a combination of both.

Clark Hotaling stated that the Mayor's comments at the last meeting directed at the City Manager were not appropriate. From my lens this is a time to work together to build on the City's past to move it forward. This should not be a time of division and division is what those comments propelled. I want to thank Dr. Peoples and Eric Peterson for taking a chance on us. Thank you for your experience and for the fresh approach you bring to our city. I want to thank every Webster Groves employee for the gifts and talents you bring to Webster Groves. In my workplace we know each of us is not as smart as all of us. Finally, I want to thank the City Council. You are addressing tough issues while being open to new ways of doing things. Talking about Webster Groves becoming a more inclusive community as well as celebrating long-standing and healthy traditions. Public admonishments and full-page ads in the Webster Kirkwood Times filled with half truths and scare tactics are not appreciated in my household. It is time we look and move forward as opposed to wanting to preserve the past.

Farrell Carfield read a statement on behalf of the Alliance for Interracial Dignity [See Exhibit B].

Dave Buck read his remarks on creativity [See Exhibit C].

Councilmember Smith clarified that he said the City doesn't have internet, but he meant to say they don't have wi-fi.

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

Mayor Welch stated that as of March 1, we are coming back to in person board and commission meetings, including Council meetings.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**BILL #9179 – THIRD READING**

On motion of Councilmember Smith, seconded by Councilmember Arnold, **BILL #9179 ENTITLED: AN ORDINANCE LEVYING THE COST OF ABATING CERTAIN NUISANCES (CUT/TRIM, REMOVE TRASH AND DEBRIS, DUMP FEES, ETC.) AS SPECIAL TAX BILLS AGAINST THE PROPERTIES HEREINAFTER DESCRIBED AND CONSTITUTING LEVIES AS LIENS ON THE RESPECTIVE PROPERTIES**, having been introduced and read twice on February 1, 2022, was taken up its title read a third time and placed upon its passage to become Ordinance #9179.

Mayor Welch called for the vote on Bill #9179.

MEMBERS VOTING:

AYES: ARNOLD, BLISS, FRANKLIN, SMITH, WELCH

NOES: NONE

ABSENT: ALEXANDER, RICHARDSON

Mayor Welch stated Bill #9179 was approved.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

A motion was made by Councilmember Bliss, seconded by Councilmember Arnold, to approve the Consent Agenda.

February 16, 2022

Mayor Welch called for the vote on the Consent Agenda.

MEMBERS VOTING:

AYES: BLISS, FRANKLIN, SMITH, WELCH, ARNOLD

NOES: NONE

ABSENT: ALEXANDER, RICHARDSON

Mayor Welch stated that the Consent Agenda was approved.

The following consent agenda was approved:

- **Approval of Minutes** – February 1, 2022
- **Liquor License (Temporary)** – Application by Mary Queen of Peace Church, 676 W. Lockwood Ave., to Sell Beer and Wine by the Drink for Consumption on the Premises Where Sold at Their Spring Festival on April 30, 2022 (Rain Date: May 1, 2022)
- **Liquor License** – Application by Fuzzy's Taco Shop, 8073 Watson Road, to Sell Liquor by the Drink for Consumption on the Premises Where Sold, and on Sundays (New Owner)
- **Liquor License (Temporary)** - Application by the Lions Club to Sell Beer at Community Days, July 1-4, 2022, at Eden Seminary, 475 E. Lockwood Ave.
- **Liquor License** – Application by Amy's Cake Pop Shop, 7967 Big Bend Blvd., to Sell Liquor Not to Be Consumed on the Premises Where Sold (2nd Location)

#### **APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

- Jeff Mazur was appointed to the Personnel Board.
- Michael Buechter, Christopher Michael and Annie Tierney were reappointed to the Plan Commission.

#### **EXECUTIVE (CLOSED) SESSION**

Councilmember Arnold made a motion, which was seconded by Councilmember Bliss, to go into Executive Closed Session per Attorney-Client Privileged Communications [MO Statute 610.021(1)] and Negotiated Contract [MO Statute 610.021 (12)].

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

MEMBERS VOTING:

AYES: FRANKLIN, SMITH, WELCH, ARNOLD, BLISS

NOES: NONE

ABSENT: ALEXANDER, RICHARDSON

Mayor Welch stated that they would go into Executive (Closed) Session.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the City Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:38 p.m. on motion of the Mayor, duly seconded.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 15<sup>th</sup> day of March 2022.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

The purpose of my comments is to respond to the comments made by our mayor at our February 1, 2022, City Council meeting.

1. **The sick leave policy** – The city's sick leave policy was outdated, requiring a change. My main issue is that the city has an unfunded liability of \$867,631.00 of sick leave cost. No assets were accrued to address this liability, and this amount is not recorded as a liability. This amount has increased the city's deficit.
2. **Budget woes** – The city had deficient spending for 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2019; note: 2018 was not a deficit spending year because of the Prop P funds. Then there was the pandemic, and the city revenue streams were crippled. Placing blame on Dr. Peoples and her administration for the loss of income due to the pandemic is wrong.
  - a. I do challenge the number of years of clean audits, and this is an area I recommend the City Manager and Council discuss with our auditors. We need to determine how an \$867,631.00 unfunded liability escaped their audit.
3. **Spending Spree** – The Council, including our Mayor, supported each hired position she mentioned. HR Manager, Communications Director, and Assistant City Manager. All the positions are vital to the city.
  - a. **DEI** – Consultant – The city had already started the DEI process before Dr. Peoples' arrival. We used an organization named Beloved Community, and the purpose was to engage staff in systemic change. Beloved Community performed an Equity Audit, and the City Council also participated in the audit. The current administration just took the process to the next level, and the entire Council supported this move.
  - b. **New Technology** – City Hall's infrastructure is very outdated. Staff requires the tools to do their job, and technology will only improve job performance.
    - i. **Television in the Chamber** – City Council approved funding for equipment for the Chamber in 2019 or early 2020, with the past administration. Dr. Peoples completed the project. The city council's goal was for the community to participate in Council meetings via some streaming method.
    - ii. **Office 365** – Office 365 is used worldwide, and I do not classify this purchase as a spending spree. Office 365 will provide our staff with the most up-to-date technology (tools) to perform their jobs. If the proper technology had been in place, some staff would have been able to work from home during the most critical peak of the pandemic.
    - iii. **Forensic Analysis** - Without spending money on a forensic analysis – The scope of errors in the Fireman's pay would not have been resolved. The forensic analysis revealed errors totaling \$157,388.00, and the errors in the Fireman's pay happened in prior administrations.
    - iv. **Compensation and Classification Consultant** – The Council approved hiring a consultant to provide current salary information. The goal was to make sure that our staff wages were competitive in the market.

- c. **Destruction** – The only destruction is spreading incorrect information and blaming the current administration for bringing forth errors that happen in the past administration or past Councils.

There is no hidden agenda to blame past administrations or city councils for errors, and the errors are not manufactured. It is the responsibility of the current City Manager and her management team, and the City Council to address these issues. I thank Dr. Peoples and her administrative team for open and honest dialogue with the Council and Community.

**Conrad, Jennifer**

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**From:** Farrell Carfield <farrellcarfield@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 17, 2022 8:23 AM  
**To:** Nakazono, Katie; Conrad, Jennifer  
**Subject:** Remarks of visitors, Alliance for Interracial Dignity

**Caution:** This is an External Message - Please be cautious when opening links or attachments

Good morning!

Here are the remarks I delivered at last night's meeting. Thank you!

**2/16/2022, Remarks at City Council**

Farrell Carfield, 542 Sunnyside Ave., on behalf of the Alliance for Interracial Dignity.

Dear Council members. Thank you for your vision in establishing the Police Community Engagement Board (PCEB). This new body has shown much promise in advancing fair and professional law enforcement that is responsive to community values. Just this month, the Hicks-Carter-Hicks report showed community recognition of the importance of this ongoing work.

The Alliance for Interracial Dignity wishes to share our support for statutory amendments that would strengthen the Board and focus its mission. For over a year, we have collaborated with the PCEB and Chief Curtis to find ways to codify lessons learned in the early years of the Board and ensure that hard-earned progress is not lost as Board members and city leaders come and go.

The loss of two Black women leaders from the Board during this time underscores the difficulty of the PCEB's work and the importance of establishing a Board design and culture that honors diverse voices. We are grateful to the PCEB for all the meeting time they dedicated to examining these questions and forming the proposals you now consider.

The Alliance began asking for the PCEB after a community-wide conversation about public safety back in January 2018. Webster Groves has made good progress since then, but we should try to move forward with a greater sense of urgency. We look forward to expeditious passage of these amendments and to ongoing partnership in service to our shared community.

One final note on a separate but related topic. The Alliance commends this Council for devoting city resources to transparency and communications, to pursuing equitable compensation structures, and to the diversity/equity/and inclusion audit. We are also grateful for Dr. Peoples' exceptional leadership in shepherding these priorities through challenging times.

These are long-overdue investments in pursuit of inclusive democracy that benefit all members of this community. It is frankly devastating to see the Preserve Webster group and Mayor Welch undermine community support by calling this a "spending spree," especially because we know our mayor fundamentally supports this work. We ask Council to stay the course in tending to our most valuable *human* resources. Thank you.

Conrad, Jennifer

EXHIBIT C

**From:** Dave Buck <dave@buckstl.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 17, 2022 8:21 AM  
**To:** Welch, Gerry; Laura W. Arnold; Pam Bliss; Alexander, Karen; Richardson, Sarah; Emerson Smith; David Franklin; Peoples, Marie; Peterson, Eric; njbatty@aol.com; Perry, Mara; Starkey, Jenny; Nakazono, Katie; Conrad, Jennifer; Davis, Scott; Rehg, Todd; Curtis, Dale; Ellis, Brett  
**Cc:** Sebastian Bellomo; Clark Hotaling; Farrell Carfield; Elyssa Sullivan; Sarah Riss; addison.david@wgmail.org; simpson.john@wgmail.org; croftrj@sbcglobal.net; Toni Hunt; Kevin Brackens; Eric Hayes; wendybruner@peaceuccstl.org; stroble@webster.edu; dkrause@eden.edu; Jaime Mowers; newsroom@timesnewspapers.com; derek.bastian@wrhm.org; linda.WRHM@gmail.com; Mary Taylor; Mark Langston; Margo Murphy; Wynn Miller; preservewebster@gmail.com; Webster Groves; emily@emilyforwebster.com; John Eppers; Karen Beck  
**Subject:** Dave Buck City Council Mtg. "Remarks of Visitors", 2/16/22

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There is a whole lot of seriousness going on in Webster Groves these days: serious people, serious issues, serious conversations, and a serious election coming up. It's all good and all important.

But, as a 20-year veteran of our community, I think, at times, it is absolutely necessary for our collective mental health and happiness to pause, smile, look for the good, and remind ourselves that life in our wonderful town is often too creative, fun and mysterious to be taken so damn serious!

Which is why I like to sing (based on the song, "Gary, Indiana", from one of the greatest Broadway musicals of all time, "The Music Man"):

"Webster Groves, Missouri, as Shakespeare would say, trips along softly on the tongue this way.

Webster Groves, Missouri,  
Webster Groves, Missouri,  
Webster Groves, Missouri,  
Let me say it once again.

Webster Groves, Missouri,  
Webster Groves, Missouri,  
Webster Groves, Missouri,  
It's the town that knew me when.

If you'd like to have a logical explanation,  
How I happened on this elegant synchopation,  
I would say without a moment of hesitation,  
There is just one place that can light my face.

Webster Groves, Missouri,  
Webster Groves, Missouri,  
NOT Louisiana, Paris, France, New York or Rome!  
But Webster Groves, Missouri,  
Webster Groves, Missouri,  
Webster Groves, Missouri,  
OUR HOME SWEET HOME!!!"

Thank YOU...Thank YOU very much!