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Detroit City Council Formal Session

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Agency: Detroit City Council

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Notes

[Agenda](#)

- Meeting started at 10:06 a.m., not every councilmember was present at first but there was a quorum. Council President Pro Tem James Tate was not present. Following a prayer was the Belle Isle Annual report presentation
- Belle Isle only reached capacity last year thanks to more access by way of the Riverwalk. It resulted in a 7% increase in visitors at the park and 3% at the aquarium.
- \$140,533,536 in investments between 2014-2024, with \$22,220,340 investments for FY 2023.

- [20 shelters and restrooms to be improved](#), ADA access improvements at the aquarium, conservatory gardens and casino = \$4.7 million

Project	Budget
Scott Fountain structural stabilization	\$6,000,000.00
Belle Isle Aquarium and Conservatory Facility Development plan and ADA access improvements	\$1,075,000.00
Belle Isle Aquarium HVAC Construction	\$10,000,000.00
Parkwide hazardous material abatement, structural repairs at multiple sites and removals	\$5,000,000.00
Park Strategic Development Plan	\$525,000.00
Park wayfinding signage	\$400,000.00
TOTAL	\$23,000,000.00

- State legislature provided \$23 million to support infrastructure in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding.
- Over \$40 million is needed to restore the boathouse. Proposals were accepted by developers, [3 out of 5 proposals were viable](#) and they are exploring further.
- 1 million visitors at the aquarium. It

will be open 4 days this summer. They have 2,000 volunteers

- Councilmember asked about darkness on Belle Isle. A representative from the Belle Isle Conservancy responded that there were [207 solar street lights installed 7 years ago](#), but 80% of them have gone out. The new lights are more environmentally-friendly and will shine at 20% when there is no movement around them and will brighten upon bikes, vehicles and pedestrians passing by.
- [Mobility study](#) should be available in July. Councilmember Gabriela Santiago-Romero is particularly interested in a shuttle service to and from the island and more language accessibility.
- Zoo structures are on the demolition list.
- Senator [Osita B. Izunaso](#) from Nigeria was given an award - studying free capital markets and an advocate for disability rights.
- Public comment included students from University High School sharing their civic concerns as well as residents voicing support for the Fugitive Dust Ordinance. There were also some who expressed their dissatisfaction with Mayor Mike Duggan. There were returning public commenters from a previous session that had talked about [pay practices at Detroit Medical Center](#).
- Budget, Finance and audit standing committee
 - Santiago-Romero objected to 16.4 “[Neighborhood Enterprise Zone Certificate Application](#) for the rehabilitation of a vacant apartment building at 667 W. Alexandrine Avenue in the Midtown Neighborhood Enterprise Zone area.”
 - 16.2, a contract with Staples, was approved with a waiver, but then is brought up again at the end of session as there is confusion about whether Staples has an active tax clearance. Because it was approved with a waiver, to reconsider the resolution would only be possible if the resolution was approved with false information which for a moment the council believed they might have done. Deputy Chief Financial Officer/Chief Procurement Officer Sandra Yu Stahl is invited to join and clarifies that Staples has an active tax clearance but that it will be expiring in June. This makes Councilmember Angela Whitfield Calloway uncomfortable because the resolution is for until 2028 and it is not confirmed that Staples has applied to renew their tax clearance. Stahl and other members of council seem confident that Staples will renew their tax clearance.
 - There was further discomfort because Calloway remained uncomfortable but Councilmember Fred Durhal felt that revisiting a resolution that had been passed with a waiver when it was confirmed that the information presented originally was correct sets a bad precedent.

- Internal Operations Standing Committee
 - Resolutions - 17.10 [Resolution for Moratorium on Liquor Licenses](#)
 - Resolution changed to be in the name of council.
 - In Detroit, MLCC has issued 517 on-premises liquor licenses where only 426 are allowed, which is 21% in excess of what is allowed. Likewise, the MLCC has issued 421 specially-designated distributor (SDD) licenses where only 214 are allowed, which is 97% in excess of what is allowed.
- Planning and Economic Development Standing committee
 - Office of the Chief Financial officer - 18.3 - [DMC Renaissance Zone](#) tax exemption was extended.
 - Law Department - 18.4 Introduction to an amendment to make exceptions for residency requirements in regards to [secondary naming of streets](#). Santiago-Romero has been advocating for this amendment so that [Vincent Chin](#) can be memorialized as someone who was actually from Highland Park and Oak Park but had significant impact in the Detroit community. There was discussion on how this could be amended so that it doesn't make room for "Kid Rock Way." A possible solution of requiring a number of councilmember sponsors and 10-year residency in Detroit.
- Detroit Brownfield Redevelopment Authority - There was 1 objection to 18.8 and no waiver provided for the approval of the [Brownfield Plan](#) for the Woodward and Charlotte Redevelopment project.
- Housing and Revitalization Department
 - 18.10 - revoking the Endless West Industrial Development District located at 1200 Oakman Blvd in accordance with [Public act 198 of 1978](#) - related to petition #2022-58 - was revisited at the end of the meeting and approved after clarification.
 - 18.12 - Resolution supporting the [Michigan Fair Chance Access to Housing Act](#) was approved in the name of the council. Originally proposed by Tate
- Planning and Development Department.
 - 18.13 - Approved property transfer between the City of Detroit Department of Transportation and the Detroit Land Bank Authority for [Cooldige expansion](#).
- Public Health and Safety Standing Committee
 - 19.1-19.25 - Demolition of commercial and residential properties
 - [Concern was brought over 100% city funding being used](#) for the demolition of commercial buildings, and particularly those owned by businesses that are still in operation.
 - 19.22 - Was of particular concern and will be revisited next week.

- The demolition list was revisited at the end of session when Calloway asked to know who the property owners were. 19.14 at 13639 Livernois owned by the Pan African Church was approved for demolition.
 - It was reported that OMNI from Harrison Township owns 19.22 at 17900 John R. which occupied almost an entire city block and that the demolition which costed almost half of a million dollars had already been completed (\$491,928.95)
 - Calloway was uncomfortable hearing that the city demolishes before confronting the owners over the expenses. She asked if they could put liens on their buildings or whether there could be any enforcement to make sure the city can recoup the cost.
- Law Department -
 - 19.47 - Amending misdemeanor violation city code to mirror state law and provide for additional misdemeanor offenses.
 - This was only introduced as coming out of the Public Health and Safety Standing Committee on May 6 so no there was nothing to approve, but there was concern about the implications of the amendment.
 - 19.48 - setting a public hearing schedule for the amendment was postponed.
- New Business
 - 20.1 - Known as the amendment to the [“Fugitive Dust Ordinance”](#) proposed by Santiago-Romero
 - Hopes to meet the standard of both industry and community. It was mentioned that [Dearborn just passed a more stringent ordinance.](#)
 - According to Councilmember Latisha Johnson, who voiced her support, particulate matter is 70% of a strand of hair.
 - There was concern about the opacity limit being set to 0% vs. 5% or higher and how the ordinance would be enforced by Durhal.
 - Voting will be postponed for 1 week which was welcomed by Santiago-Romero as she said it would give her more time to develop an enforcement plan.
 - 20.7 - Council President Mary Sheffield voiced concern over the resolution to increase funds of [Williams Recreation Center](#) construction as there has been talk about them also providing shelter as well as heating and cooling services. She wanted to ensure that it would still remain a community center accessible to seniors and youth and so at the end of session this

was revisited and it was decided that 20.7 would be revisited next week.

- 20.9 - To provide a subsidy for the operation, maintenance, and capital improvements for the Detroit People Mover by \$38.5 million was postponed.
- 20.10 - The purchase of 10 hybrid SUVs for the [Mental Health Co-Response Program](#) was approved using 100% ARPA funding.
- 20.11 - To provide 100% city funding of \$1,365,000 for the management and operation of Gethsemane, Forest Hill and Mount Hazel cemeteries was postponed- potentially inspired by a public commenters concern.
- 20.21 - Santiago-Romero submitting a grant application to the U.S Department of Transportation for the FY 2024 [Low or No Emission grant](#), approved.
- Resolutions - 20.22-20.25 canceling meetings to attend the [Mackinac Policy Conference](#).
- May 16 was declared [Amp Fiddler](#) Day.
- Meeting was adjourned. at 2:27 p.m.

Summary

- City funding is used to demolish commercially owned buildings before the funding is actually approved by council. The city then gives the owners 30 days to repay, but it doesn't seem like there is much incentive for them to pay back the city after their buildings are already demolished. Councilmember Calloway was interested in the possibility of putting liens on their properties or finding another process that doesn't cost the city, especially when properties are owned by companies still in operation outside of Detroit.
- Although there was strong support for the Fugitive Dust Ordinance in public comment, there was skepticism from Pro Tem Tate on how it could be enforced and whether it would be too restrictive on local industry such as the opacity regulations stipulated.
- Council President Mary Sheffield's resolution on the moratorium of liquor licenses was amended to be in the name of the council and will cease the issuance of liquor licenses in Detroit until the Michigan Liquor Control Commission can devise a method to limit the number of licenses to the amount allowed under the Michigan Liquor Control Code of 1998.

Follow-Up Questions

- 80% of the lights on Belle Isle are out. How was Belle Isle duped into solar lights that only last 9 years? How does the city accept bids on this sort of infrastructure so

that it is not a waste of city funding and resources?

- How can the City of Detroit find more sustainable ways to demolish abandoned and unsafe buildings without fronting the bill? Could residents petition to put a cap on how much city funds are used for demolition of commercial properties and possibly develop a fund with the money that is repaid to help restore buildings for community use?
- What are the implications of passing [line item 19.47](#)? Are the currently listed offenses in the resolution not currently misdemeanors in Detroit? For refusing to be fingerprinted, Michigan law doesn't automatically suggest a misdemeanor but "A person who violates subsection (1) is guilty of a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment for not more than 90 days **or** by a fine of not more than \$500.00, or both." Does this resolution mirror exactly or would Detroit be handing out only the misdemeanor? Also [the Supreme Court of Michigan ruled unanimously in 2022](#) that fingerprinting someone who has not been charged with a crime qualifies as an unreasonable search in violation of the Fourth Amendment and that police would need a warrant. Would this be recognized, given that denying fingerprinting itself would be a crime?

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