

CITY OF WEBSTER GROVES

May 5, 2020

The City Council met this date in a regular session in the Council Chambers at City Hall at #4 E. Lockwood Ave., via ZOOM, and available to the public via teleconference at 7:37 p.m.

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

A quorum was present.

Also present: Mr. Steve Wylie, City Manager
Mr. Neil Bruntrager, City Attorney
Ms. Katie Nakazono, City Clerk

REMARKS OF VISITORS

Neil Bruntrager, City Attorney, read submitted Remarks of Visitors into the record. Submissions were received from:

- Daniel Bruzzini – 125 Orchard (Exhibit A)
- Dave Buck – 124 S. Elm Ave. (Exhibit B)

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

Mayor Welch stated that on Saturday, May 9, the City is participating in Mayors for Meals, a food drive to benefit the St. Louis Area Food Bank.

NEW BUSINESS

FIRE STATION 2 SCHEMATIC DESIGN REVIEW

Jon Emert and John Mueller of JEMA Studio gave a presentation on the schematic design for Fire Station 2.

There was Council consensus to give their blessing to the schematic design.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

Mayor Welch called for the vote on the Consent Agenda.

MEMBERS VOTING:

AYES: BELLOMO, ARNOLD, BLISS, FRANKLIN, SMITH, WELCH,

NOES: NONE

Mayor Welch stated that the Consent Agenda was approved.

The following consent agenda was approved:

- **Approval of Minutes** – April 21, 2020
- **Resolution #2020-17** – Authorizing the City Manager to Enter into a Professional Services Contract for Communications and Engagement Services

May 5, 2020

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

No Appointments to Boards and Commissions.

EXECUTIVE (CLOSED) SESSION

Councilmember Arnold made a motion, which was seconded by Councilmember Franklin, to go into Executive Closed Session per Attorney-Client Privileged Communications [MO Statute 610.021(1)], and Personnel [MO Statute 610.021 (3)].

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

MEMBERS VOTING:

AYES: ARNOLD, BLISS, FRANKLIN, SMITH, WELCH, BELLOMO

NOES: NONE

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 8:45 p.m. on motion of the Mayor, duly seconded.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 19th day of May 2020.


CITY CLERK


MAYOR



Katie Nakazono - Remarks of Visitors

EXHIBIT A

From: Daniel Bruzzini <dbruzzini@gmail.com>
To: <citycouncil@webstergroves.org>
Date: 5/4/2020 7:55 PM
Subject: Remarks of Visitors
Cc: Daniel Bruzzini <dbruzzini@gmail.com>

4 May 2020

1. Given that the City of Webster Groves is projected to be 500 thousand dollars in debt for 2020 and 1 million dollars in debt for 2021 and the 2008 recession took years to recover from, what is the City of Webster Groves doing to tighten its belt? Why is the City continuing with planned pay raises for its employees when so many Webster Groves residents are suffering severe financial hardships? When income changes, businesses and families make tough decisions and cut spending. Why shouldn't Webster Groves do the same? For example,

1. Suspending planned pay raises for all City employees except essential personnel, such as, police, firefighters, and EMS.
2. Not hiring a second Public relations firm at \$125-\$210/hour to promote the SG Collaborative
3. Suspend the SG Collaborative so you don't spend any more money planning for something that won't be built or if built will be just more expensive empty space that no one can afford and just a waste of hard-earned taxpayer money.
4. Furloughing and/or reduced hours for non-essential City personnel.

Not easy decisions, but does it seem fair to expect those who have lost their jobs, those who you represent to pay for non-essential personnel, non-essential services, and non-essential personnel pay raises? The citizens of Webster Groves have lost jobs and are already dealing with a 17-22 percent average increase in their property taxes. Increasing taxes is not the first public finance solution the Mayor and Council Members should pray for when the citizens of Webster Groves are suffering from the worst economic downturn of their lives. Property taxes have already gone up much to the detriment of those on fixed incomes such as the elderly, the disabled, and veterans. An Internet sales tax would only serve to pass the cost of that tax onto the customers and limit sales much to the detriment of the business and the consumer. We want businesses to bounce back, hitting them with a new Internet sales tax is like kicking business in the teeth when it is down.

2. Has the Mayor or any council member reached out to Andrew Chao, president of the Webster Groves Chamber of Commerce, to get his input on the SG Collaborative? Will local businesses even be interested in the SG Collaborative? If you want what's best for Webster Groves local businesses, you don't need a second Public Relations firm at \$210/hour to contact our great local businesses in the Chamber of Commerce. Just give Andrew Chao the president a call.

3. In *McCullough versus Maryland*, our first Supreme Court Chief Justice John Marshall stated, "The Power to tax is the power to destroy." Has the City of Webster Groves spoken with the Chamber of Commerce regarding the impact an Internet sales tax would have on their businesses? Given that nearly all businesses will have an internet sales aspect, it is not a

EXHIBIT A

question of fairness between "mom and pop" brick and mortar stores versus online retail giants like Amazon, but a question of whether or not a "mom and pop" business can get started and survive long enough to grow their business through the internet and foot traffic. Since there isn't much foot traffic these days nor likely to be for a long time, Internet sales are a lifeline for our neighbors to open up stores to serve us and expand their customer base. Besides, any Internet sales tax, like all taxes on business, ultimately gets paid by you and I, the consumer. The cost of taxation gets tacked on to the price making it more expensive so less is bought which harms business. If less is bought, then less sales tax is collected. In addition, an Internet sales tax on our neighbor's business comes with additional regulatory responsibilities, complexity, and penalties to account for every sale and the corresponding tax associated with it. This administrative burden is easier for big companies like Amazon to handle and hard for our small local neighbor-owned companies. This inhibits new business and kills existing businesses that are barely hanging on these days. Besides, once a new tax is created, it has eternal life and only goes in one direction up, up, and up. Sir Winston Churchill said it best, "I contend that for a nation (or Webster Groves) to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle."

Respectfully,

Dan

Daniel B. Bruzzini

EXHIBIT B

Katie Nakazono - Remarks of Visitors for May 5, 2020, City Council Regular Meeting

From: Dave Buck <dave@buckstl.com>
To: "citycouncil@webstergroves.org" <citycouncil@webstergroves.org>
Date: 5/5/2020 3:57 PM
Subject: Remarks of Visitors for May 5, 2020, City Council Regular Meeting
Cc: "wylies@webstergroves.org" <wylies@webstergroves.org>, "njbatty@aol.com"...

All Webster Groves City Council, Staff & Friends,

Most importantly, I hope that you and your families are and will continue to stay safe and well at home, in the face of a new projection that more than doubles the US deaths from the virus to more than 134,000, up from the current 70,000.

I learned yesterday that a fellow graduate from my Class of 1971 of Wichita Southeast High School, Bruce Reed, died on Sunday, May 3, not of the virus but of a random, senseless tragic car accident. He has been a good friend over the last 49 years and I had just chatted with him last Saturday.

It is a very sad and tough day. To me, Bruce's death was a reminder that anyone of us can go at any minute. Each of our lives is so very precious and that all we can truly do is to live in the moment and value every second with those we care for and love.

Thus, when the smoke finally clears from the pandemic and it is safe to live again. I hope we do not simply return to where we were, but that we make a major pivot or mid-course corrections to truly create a brave new world for all of us.

And I hope that these essential corrections includes that we learn to set our petty differences aside; take pleasure in the simple things; love our family, friends and neighbors like never before; and live each day as if it was our last and be grateful for each and every moment.

Thank YOU!!!!