



APPROVED

**CITY OF YPSILANTI
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
ONE SOUTH HURON ST.
YPSILANTI, MI 48197
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2014
7:00 P.M.**

I. CALL TO ORDER –

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL –

Council Member Brown	Present	Council Member Robb	Present
Council Member Murdock	Present	Council Member Vogt	Present
Mayor Pro-Tem Richardson	Present	Mayor Edmonds	Present

III. INVOCATION –

Mayor Edmonds asked all to stand for a moment of silence.

IV. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE –

"I pledge allegiance to the flag, of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

V. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION –

1. Sean Stidd, 1122 Pearl St, stated he recommends Council select Beth Bashert for the Ward 2 Vacancy. Mr. Stidd said he has known Ms. Bashert for a number of years and knows her to be a strong advocate for Ypsilanti.
2. Kira Berman, 1122 Pearl St., stated she is here to recommend Council select Beth Bashert for the Council vacancy. Ms. Berman stated Ms. Bashert is a tireless worker for equity in Ypsilanti and a very level headed individual who considers things very carefully.

VI. REMARKS BY THE MAYOR –

- Thanked those who spoke during audience participation.
- Stated the interview process includes three applicants and each applicant will be allowed 30 to 40 minutes to answer questions from Council. Mayor Edmonds asked applicants to judge their answers appropriately to allow themselves time to answer each question. She added that at the end of the interviews there might be some deliberation from Council. If not, Council will discuss the next steps of this process.
- Informed the public, per the City Charter, Council must make its selection by the December 16th meeting.

VII. WARD 2 COUNCIL MEMBER INTERVIEWS -

Beth Bashert

Council Member Robb

1. Why didn't you file for the August election? What piqued your interest for public service since the filing deadline and Ms. Moeller's resignation?

Ms. Bashert stated sitting on City Council has been one of her personal goals. However, at this time she is very busy and mounting a campaign wasn't something that occurred to her. Ms. Bashert said she could have mounted an election but at this time it did not seem opportunistic. Ms. Bashert stated this situation is "low hanging fruit" and possibly an easy way for her to serve without having to do the work.

2. What policy changes would you support to improve the struggling manufacturing sector in Ypsilanti?

Ms. Bashert responded that she is not familiar enough with Ypsilanti's policy structure to answer that question. However, Ms. Bashert stated she does want to bring business and industry to the City but she is not sure if that is all the City needs to be successful.

Mayor Pro-Tem Richardson

3. What is your attitude about Water Street (something vs. waiting)?

Ms. Bashert responded she wants Water Street to be successful, but does not want to see perfect stand in the way of good enough. Ms. Bashert said she does not believe Ypsilanti needs to beg or give the property away to create interest in development. Ms. Bashert stated she is in support of subsidized housing and not entirely unhappy regarding the construction of the Dollar Store. Ms. Bashert stated Water Street should contain business that will cater to all citizens of Ypsilanti.

4. Thompson Block - will you be willing to wait or push for quick resolution?

Ms. Bashert responded she is not certain that there are any really good answers developed to date. The Thompson Block has been a headache for the City for years, but she stated she does not have enough information to provide a complete answer. Ms. Bashert said she has heard that several businesses have submitted letters of intent but whether or not that will materialize into actual businesses is yet to be seen. Ms. Bashert added the project cosmetically looks good and could move forward and she would love to see it vibrant as it would extend the footprint of Depot Town. Ms. Bashert concluded saying that it is not really an "either or" situation

Ms. Bashert added that there will be questions asked that she does not have all the information necessary to answer completely. Ms. Bashert stated she suspects that no matter who is selected the learning curve will be intense.

Mayor Edmonds

5. Talk about your experience developing, managing, analyzing, and cutting budgets; and how you would apply this experience to City Council decision making.

Ms. Bashert responded she has run a number of campaigns, formed organizations, and has been a fund organizer for a number of organizations and in those positions budgets are very important. Ms. Bashert stated she is very good at sticking to budgets and when she sets a budget she meets it. Ms. Bashert said

however, it is important to know a budget is not set in stone and line items can be altered. Ms. Bashert stated if situations change Council would need to adapt and she is not afraid to cut things or add revenue. Ms. Bashert said she is aware the City is facing budget constraints and she would rather not make decisions that would cause massive changes for little gain. Ms. Bashert stated she would rather look for sensible changes, as has been the City's strategy for some time. Ms. Bashert stated the first thing she does when she starts a campaign is write a budget and as every plan is executed the budget is examined, if you don't have money you can't spend it.

6. Where do you feel the city's opportunities are in economic development are (what sector, market, type of development, etc.) and why, and what would you do to support them?

Ms. Bashert responded there are two types of development the City needs; one is bringing more business and industry and the other is to grow the residential base. Ms. Bashert said in a City that develops almost all revenue exclusively on property tax this is crucial. Ms. Bashert stated she sees Michigan Ave. as having a lot of opportunity and new business are moving in and progress is being made, but there still are empty store fronts she would like to fill. Ms. Bashert stated she would like to fill the empty store fronts with local businesses to keep money in Ypsilanti. Ms. Bashert stated Ypsilanti is becoming a funky edgy town with a lot of art and culture and those are the type of businesses needed in downtown. Michigan has not had a lot of growth in the manufacturing sector, it has had some movement, but she is not sure where that would go in Ypsilanti. Ms. Bashert concluded saying downtown business development would be most interesting to her.

Council Member Brown

7. What do you anticipate being most challenging for you?

Ms. Bashert responded the learning curve of the process, the nuts and bolts of the budget and goals, and being able to participate fully. Ms. Bashert stated she is not afraid to ask questions, but she does not want to slow down the process. Ms. Bashert added it would not be hard to overcome, just that it would take some time.

8. What do you feel are the greatest barriers to effective policy making in the city right now?

Ms. Bashert answered she is not sure what barriers are effecting policy at the moment or if any exist. Ms. Bashert stated if there are; communication and looking at the bigger picture are the most useful tools. Ms. Bashert said sometimes people get caught in their own world, but being on Council means setting aside individual perspective and looking from the perspective of the City. Ms. Bashert said she feels she is a big picture person and so that mindset would be comfortable for her.

Council Member Vogt

9. Excluding economic development, what are your ideas for how the city can improve tax revenues and/or cut expenses? What would you do to support them?

Council Member Vogt stated he would like the applicant to respond to both question in a single answer rather than individually.

Ms. Bashert answered it is tricky being landlocked and having so much of the City involved in Non-profits and respects the economic development occurring especially regarding Water Street. Ms. Bashert said increasing our population would create higher levels of tax revenue not restricted in the way her taxes are as a 20 year resident. Ms. Bashert said if business is increased higher tax revenue will be achieved and the addition of loft apartments in the Downtown will result in higher revenues. Ms. Bashert stated

cuts in spending are very tricky and the City has made significant cuts and the suggestions she has are minimal, such as; changing to every other week trash pick-up, going to fee based for some of the services. Ms. Bashert said that in the anti-tax environment the country is in currently, fees are taking on bigger roles. Ms. Bashert stated she was in support of the proposed income tax, which was voted down so new ideas need to be created in order to solve the problem.

10. Excluding economic development, what are the 3 main areas that you feel the city must address to resolve its long term budgetary shortages?

Ms. Bashert responded one is image; she is incredibly proud of Ypsilanti and does not believe the image that it has is accurate. Ms. Bashert stated safety is becoming an issue and it is becoming more acute than in the past. Ms. Bashert stated she lives in a safe neighborhood but over the past few years that perception has changed and that affects the image. Ms. Bashert said the third issue of economic development is regarding the Downtown she would like to see Michigan Ave. full of businesses that are open six days a week. The improved walkability of the Downtown has helped and now the Downtown needs more destination businesses.

Council Member Murdock

11. What skills or perspective do you bring to city council that is new or complementary—or even contrary—to what we already have?

Ms. Bashert responded she brings humor and optimism. Ms. Bashert said she is in car sales and you have to be optimistic to sell cars. Ms. Bashert stated she possess the ability to hear areas of commonality, even when they are disagreeing, and when there is an area of commonality there is something to build upon.

12. Describe your approach to problem solving and working as a team on Council, especially with contentious issues.

Ms. Bashert responded she is incredibly pragmatic. Ms. Bashert stated she is not invested in perfect, although she likes to see it when possible, but she is okay with good enough. Ms. Bashert said she is willing to work hard to get above “good enough” and willing to put conflict aside to solve problems. Ms. Bashert stated she has very clear boundaries, meaning one issue is one issue and bring clarity to those issues.

Mayor Edmonds informed those in the audience that the candidates were asked to not be in chambers during the interviews of the other candidates.

Gail Wolkoff

Mayor Edmonds informed Ms. Wolkoff that the interview includes 12 questions with each Council Member asking two. Mayor Edmonds stated that each applicant will be asked the same questions.

Council Member Brown

1. What do you anticipate being most challenging for you?

Ms. Wolkoff answered learning, listening, and watching what the community wants and needs compared to what is possible. Also, balancing what she does know and what she doesn’t, and learning how her skill set can be used to accomplish City goals.

2. What do you feel are the greatest barriers to effective policy making in the city right now?

Ms. Wolkoff responded having all the voices at the table; listening to what the Community needs and balancing that with what can be done. Ms. Wolkoff suggested if the Community is having problems getting to Council meetings than Council meetings could be held throughout the City. Ms. Wolkoff stated Council should take the initiative to ensure that the Community be heard.

Council Member Vogt

3. Excluding economic development, what are your ideas for how the city can improve tax revenues and/or cut expenses? What would you do to support them?
4. Excluding economic development, what are the 3 main areas that you feel the city must address to resolve its long term budgetary shortages?

Ms. Wolkoff responded Ypsilanti is filled with incredibly talented individuals and Council should understand how to tap into that human capital. Ms. Wolkoff stated regarding three main areas to address to resolve budgetary shortages are; the City needs to entice people to stay in Ypsilanti, get people to want to educate their children in Ypsilanti, and keep their children here by any cost, because if people chose schools for their children outside of Ypsilanti they are more likely to shop outside of Ypsilanti. Ms. Wolkoff stated if the education system is repaired, and she realizes City Council doesn't have jurisdiction over the school system, but those jurisdictions need to combine efforts to solve this problem. Ms. Wolkoff stated the second issue that needs to be addressed is Ypsilanti needs more community activities that will draw more people to the City; this will help to create more business. Ms. Wolkoff said third, she would like to remove the imaginary boundaries and repair the disjointedness of the community. All of those items would add to the budget and no cuts would be necessary.

Council Member Murdock

5. What skills or perspectives do you bring to City Council that are new or complementary—or even contrary—to what we already have?

Ms. Wolkoff responded she has a sense of humor, she listens well, and she is connected with a lot of different communities, and that she is trusted in the community. Ms. Wolkoff stated she does not know the skill sets of the other Council Members and is not sure what she offers that isn't already present. Ms. Wolkoff stated she has lived here for a number of years, raised her family here, and is present in the community often speaking with citizens of Ypsilanti. Ms. Wolkoff stated she is a very divergent thinker and is a person who accomplishes things rather than a person who talks about accomplishing things.

6. Describe your approach to problem solving and working as a team on Council, especially with contentious issues.

Ms. Wolkoff responded she would use humor during contentious issues. Ms. Wolkoff stated she is able to detach herself from the emotional aspect of an issue in order to understand a person's perspective and affirm what the person is saying to work toward coming to an understanding.

Council Member Robb

7. Why didn't you file for the August election? What piqued your interest for public service since the filing deadline and Ms. Moeller's resignation?

Ms. Wolkoff answered serving on Council is something she has been thinking about and once she heard Ms. Moeller was stepping down she thought about it more seriously. Ms. Wolkoff said she put herself in Ms. Moeller shoes and the hard decision of balancing her life and being the child of elderly people.

8. What policy changes would you support to improve the struggling manufacturing sector in Ypsilanti?

Ms. Wolkoff responded due to lack of information she is unable to answer the question at this time.

Mayor Pro-Tem Richardson

9. What is your attitude about Water Street (something vs. waiting)?

Ms. Wolkoff responded something needs to happen soon the City needs that problem solved in order to move forward.

10. Thompson Block - will you be willing to wait or push for quick resolution?

Ms. Wolkoff replied quick is never good, but a resolution does need to happen because it is a blemish on the City. Also, the location of the Thompson Block in Depot Town has the ability to draw many different types of people to the district.

Mayor Edmonds

11. Talk about your experience developing, managing, analyzing, and cutting budgets; and how you would apply this experience to City Council decision making.

Ms. Wolkoff replied personally she has not had that experience, however, budget cuts put people on a defense and when something is cut it creates a hole. Ms. Wolkoff stated her skill of facilitating connections between individuals in the City can be useful to solve these problems. Ms. Wolkoff concluded if there is a cut the next question is how it is going to be filled.

12. Where do you feel the city's opportunities are in economic development are (what sector, market, type of development, etc.) and why, and what would you do to support them?

Ms. Wolkoff replied the City has a plethora of opportunity for economic development; currently the City is very dependent on car transportation and alternative transportation could be examined. Ms. Wolkoff stated the City needs to examine what the 20 to 30 year old demographic wants in a City and adapt Ypsilanti to fit that mold.

Anne Brown

Council Member Murdock

1. What skills or perspective do you bring to City Council that are new or complementary—or even contrary—to what we already have?

Ms. Brown answered she brings a wealth of knowledge regarding public policy, implementation of that policy, and writing of that policy. Ms. Brown stated she has knowledge of the constituency and the community, having lived in Ward 2 for 14 years and in Ypsilanti for 30 years. Ms. Brown stated skills that she possesses that are complementary to Council are; consensus and coalition builder and she is an independent thinker, which helps her to assess situations. Ms. Brown explained her job involves reviewing policies and working with constituents to access that policy.

2. Describe your approach to problem solving and working as a team on Council, especially with contentious issues.

Ms. Brown responded she performs that on a daily basis as District Manager for State Representative Rutledge, a policy position. Ms. Brown stated as an independent citizen she would assess a situation and discover needed steps, resources, and partners to find the solution. Ms. Brown stated the steps of the solution need to be prioritized, and to do that conversation between all the stakeholders is necessary to negotiate the steps of that process.

Council Member Robb

3. Why didn't you file for the August election? What piqued your interest for public service since the filing deadline and Ms. Moeller's resignation?

Ms. Brown replied she did not want to challenge her Ward 2 colleague and at that time she was involved in an election for Representative Rutledge. Ms. Brown stated it is her practice to set goals for herself and one goal was to run for election in 2016. Ms. Brown explained by that time her daughter would be out of high school and she would have more time to devote to a campaign.

4. What policy changes would you support to improve the struggling manufacturing sector in Ypsilanti?

Ms. Brown responded one of the things she looked at over the last year is full inclusion and that is making sure every sector has access to economic opportunities. Ms. Brown said one business type increasing in Ypsilanti is small manufacturing and policies need to be in place to support that. Ms. Brown added this will help the City increase revenue but the City must not overtax keeping business owners from earning enough to support their business.

Mayor Pro-Tem Richardson

5. What is your attitude about Water Street (something vs. waiting)?

Ms. Brown responded as a long term resident it is distressing seeing Water Street sit vacant. Ms. Brown stated she knows there is a lot of contention surrounding the Family Dollar and what people consider affordable housing. Ms. Brown stated that she feels the City should not wait; Ypsilanti has to understand what the base population is, what their income level is, and who the users of the Family Dollar would be and she feels Ypsilanti fits that demographic. Ms. Brown said she understands people's concern with overabundance of affordable housing, but having the opportunity to talk with the developer and review the process and materials she was persuaded it was a good project. Ms. Brown said the City needs to go ahead and use that land and reduce the tax burden on the City.

6. Thompson Block - will you be willing to wait or push for quick resolution?

Ms. Brown responded the City needs a quick resolution and take the necessary steps as a Council Member to make those decisions and stand by those decisions for the best interest of the citizens. Ms. Brown stated she is of the mindset that when the data points indicate how something will benefit the City and the residents Council should act. Ms. Brown said Council needs to move forward, once you head down a direction you need to continue on that path.

Mayor Edmonds

7. Talk about your experience developing, managing, analyzing, and cutting budgets; and how you would apply this experience to City Council decision making.

Ms. Brown replied at one time she was the executive director of a non-profit and at that position she was responsible for developing and implementing a budget. Ms. Brown stated the non-profit was a hybrid including the City of Detroit, the non-profit's budget was \$6.2 million and the City's budget was about \$15 million. Ms. Brown stated this fits with the City Council position because she knows how to develop and understand a budget.

8. Where do you feel the city's opportunities are in economic development (what sector, market, type of development, etc.) and why, and what would you do to support them?

Ms. Brown responded operating with the mindset of full inclusion. Ms. Brown stated the City needs to tap into the EMU School of Business ideas generated by graduates, and utilize SPARK East to facilitate economic development. Ms. Brown said when she says full inclusion she means any business. Ms. Brown said the City needs to support businesses even if it means providing office space for a few months. Ms. Brown stated the things that concern her is that when students graduate there is nothing for them in Ypsilanti that will support their ideas for businesses.

Council Member Brown

9. What do you anticipate being most challenging for you?

Ms. Brown replied she is a patient person and does not see what would be a challenge for her other than getting into the flow of being a Council Member. Ms. Brown stated she has always been a behind the scenes person, working to make sure that the process and practices are in place and this would be a role reversal for her as she is not used to being out front.

10. What do you feel are the greatest barriers to effective policy making in the city right now?

Ms. Brown replied that it may be communication issues with residents and Council itself.

Council Member Vogt

11. Excluding economic development, what are your ideas for how the city can improve tax revenues and/or cut expenses? What would you do to support them?
12. Excluding economic development, what are the 3 main areas that you feel the city must address to resolve its long term budgetary shortages?

Ms. Brown answered one thing is that such a high amount of tax revenue comes from rental properties and that is something that needs to be restructured. Ms. Brown stated the three areas to resolve budgetary shortages would be; restructuring tax code on rental properties, a contract for computer/technology, and restructuring the budget in terms of line-items.

VII. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION –

1. Andrew Fanta, 1221 West Moorland Blvd, stated he would be proud to have any of the three applicants as a Council Member for Ward 2. Mr. Fanta stated he ranked the applicants in this order; Beth Bashert, Ann Brown, then Gail Wolkoff. Mr. Fanta liked Ms. Bashert's concern for image and has felt for years that the promotion of the City should be a greater concern. Mr. Fanta stated he thinks Ms. Bashert is an

eternal optimist, pragmatic and that she would bring clarity to the discussion. He liked Anne Brown a great deal; however, he is worried about how her skill set would mesh with Council. Mr. Fanta stated he liked her comments regarding moving the Thompson Block forward. Mr. Fanta stated he liked Ms. Wolkoff and thought she has strengths but overall she did not get down to the questions Council would face.

2. Ricky Jefferson, 113 Devonshire Ypsilanti Township, stated he was pleased how the process went and felt that Council asked very good questions. Mr. Jefferson asked if the applicants had the opportunity to address Council on a one-on-one basis.
3. Jamie Berlin, 21 N. Normal, echoed the comments of Mr. Fanta.

VIII. REMARKS BY THE MAYOR –

- Addressed Mr. Jefferson's question stating candidate have chosen individually if they want to reach out to Council via phone and she that she has spoken with two candidates. Mayor Edmonds stated Council has had time to review each candidate's applications, which are also available on the City's website.

IX. COUNCIL DISCUSSION –

Mayor Edmonds asked Council for suggestions for next steps in the decision making process.

Council Member Murdock responded to put it at the front of the December 16th agenda along with a resolution and discuss it.

Mayor Edmonds asked how Mr. Murdock suggests Council make the final selection.

Council Member Murdock responded the resolution will be blank and the Council Member who reads the resolution will fill in the blank following the protocol for selecting Mayor Pro-Tem and we discuss while the resolution is on the floor.

Mayor Edmonds stated many communities across the country use a ranking system for appointed candidates. Mayor Edmonds asked if Council would prefer a resolution and then discuss the pros and cons of each applicant.

Council Member Vogt responded that since Council is down to three applicants a simpler process will work and whoever is nominated, in the manner Mr. Murdock suggested, is just the nominal nomination if there are still thoughts of other applicants that will be a part of the consideration. Mr. Vogt stated he is in support of Mr. Murdock's proposal.

Mayor Pro-Tem Richardson stated she is thinking about the hiring of the City Manager and how each Council Member listed their choice.

Council Member Robb stated Council did not list a choice for City Manager. Mr. Robb stated Council will discuss this with one another and will know who the selected applicant will be, that is how the City Manager was selected.

Mayor Edmonds asked Clerk McMullan for clarification.

City Clerk McMullan responded the candidates were given a number and Council decided who would be interviewed for a second time, and then a motion to approve selection was made.

Council Member Robb stated in an ideal world hopefully each Council Member will know who has the best chance of being selected and there will be a unanimous vote. He added he would hate to see the candidate selected have anyone vote against them.

Mayor Pro-Tem Richardson stated she does not particularly like that option stating that it is forcing Council to choose someone they may not support.

Council Member Murdock responded that they can offer an amendment to the resolution.

Council Member Vogt stated he thinks Mr. Robb's point is that after discussion the obvious will become obvious.

Council Member Brown asked what happens if in those conversations the obvious does not become obvious then Council Members may vote against a certain individual.

Council Member Murdock stated then the obvious is not obvious.

City Attorney Barr stated Council can discuss this individually but Council can't caucus to make a decision, it must be done in open session.

Mayor Edmonds asked what level of conversation should be in public.

Council Member Murdock stated pretty much all of Council knows the three applicants to some degree and each Council Member may have a preference as of today, so what you are considering transparency is really a sham, this matter should just be put up for a vote and six of us will decide who will fill the vacancy.

Council Member Robb stated that on any given issue there may not be discussion, how you act at the Council table is how constituents will judge your performance and he does not think this issue is different than any other issue brought before Council. Mr. Robb stated he thinks all three applicants are wonderful and is excited to review his notes.

Mayor Edmond asked if Council is comfortable with voting on a resolution and if the resolution fails discuss another resolution with another name.

Mayor Pro-Tem Richardson stated she is not comfortable with the idea of discussing people openly.

Council Member Vogt stated Council does not have to have any further conversation, this is a political choice and more discussion is not required.

Mayor Pro-Tem Richardson stated according to Mr. Murdock there will be a discussion.

Council Member Murdock stated Council can choose to have discussion, but are not required.

Mayor Pro-Tem Richardson asked Mr. Vogt if Council should speak to each other one on one before the decision.

Council Member Vogt responded either way Council should discuss this one on one before the decision is made, whether there is further public discussion or not.

Mayor Edmonds stated as a part of the parliamentary process, if a motion is made and supported discussion can happen to the extent needed.

Council Member Robb stated this procedure is similar to that of nominating Council Members as liaisons and that procedure is to use blank resolutions.

Council Member Brown stated she is not fully comfortable with the procedure but it does make sense.

Mayor Pro-Tem Richardson stated the resolution system as described will be uncomfortable but sufficient.

Mayor Edmonds invited citizens to read the minutes and inform Council on their opinions.

Council Member Murdock stated whoever wants to speak again may during audience participation.

XI. ADJOURNMENT –

Council Member Vogt moved, supported by Council Member Brown, to adjourn the meeting.

On a voice vote, the motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.