

Committee of the Whole
Minutes of the Meeting
February 5, 2024

1. Vice-President LaCava called the meeting to Order at 8:00pm in the City Council Chamber.
2. Vice-President LaCava requested that a roll call be taken to record the attendance for the meeting. The COW Clerk called the roll – Councillors Bradley-MacArthur, Brasco, Dunn, Durkee, Hanley, Harris, Katz, LaFauci, LeBlanc, Logan, President McLaughlin, McMenimen, Stanley, Vidal, and Vice President LaCava were all present in-person.
3. President McLaughlin moved to approve the minutes of the COW meeting held on January 16, 2024. The motion was adopted on a voice vote and the minutes of the January 16, 2024 meeting were approved.
4. A request was received from the Mayor to confirm the appointment of Gloria Champion as a member of the Conservation Commission. Councillor LaFauci spoke favorably of Ms. Champion and moved to hear from her. The motion was adopted on a voice vote. Upon questions from Councillor LaFauci, Ms. Champion spoke of her extensive background and experience as it related to conservation. Councillors Bradley-MacArthur and McMenimen asked follow up questions about Ms. Champion's position on specific conservation matters. Ms. Champion also stated her support for the Conservation Commission returning to in-person meetings. Councillor LaFauci moved to confirm the appointment of Gloria Champion as a member of the Conservation Commission. The motion was adopted on a voice vote.
5. A request was received from the Mayor to confirm the appointment of Patricia Sweder as a member of the Board of Health. President McLaughlin spoke favorably of Ms. Sweder and moved to hear from her. The motion was adopted on a voice vote. Upon questions from President McLaughlin, Ms. Sweder spoke of her extensive background and experience as it related to the health profession. Councillor Hanley and Councillor McMenimen also spoke in support of Ms. Sweder, citing her extensive education and background. President McLaughlin moved to confirm the appointment of Patricia Sweder as a member of the Board of Health. The motion was adopted on a voice vote.
6. A resolution concerning the special permit process was submitted by Councillor Harris. Councillor Harris gave a brief statement about the resolution citing the benefits of amending the process; involving the Law Department at the outset and by keeping the public hearing open, the start date of the 90-day timeline could be extended to allow continued public input with the inclusion of additional information on the proposed project. Councillor Harris moved to hear from Assistant City Solicitors Patrica Azadi and

Katie Laughman. The motion was adopted on a voice vote. Attorney Laughman handed out a multi-page exhibit to coincide with her power point presentation. Attorney Laughman explained the benefits of the change in process and cited the two changes being sought. The two proposed changes were (1) immediate referral to the Law Department and (2) public hearing to remain open while the matter is in the Ordinance & Rules Committee. Councillors LeBlanc, Logan, Bradley-MacArthur, Dunn and McMenimen asked several follow up questions about the flow of information, the continuance of the public hearing and the coordination between the Ordinance & Rules Committee and the City Council. Councillor Brasco raised a question about the impact of Council Rule 85 on the proposed change to the special permit process. Councillor Logan spoke about Council Rule 85 and clarified that the Ordinance & Rules Committee is a quasi-judicial body, whose purpose is to seek and gather information from the petitioner requesting approval of the special permit. Councillor Brasco continued to raise his concerns about Council Rule 85 and its potential impact on the ability of Councillors to address concerns of their constituents outside of a public hearing. Councillor LeBlanc asked questions about the public hearing process when additional information is entered. Councillor Harris asked if Council Rule 85 should be rewritten as it pertains to this new process for special permits. Councillor Stanley stated Councillors could elicit opinions and concerns from their constituents without disclosing their position on the matter. Councillor Logan spoke about the difference between a special permit and a zone change that is being considered in the Ordinance & Rules Committee; explaining a special permit is treated as a judicial matter and a zone change is treated as a legislative matter. Councillor Logan further stated that Council Rule 85 does not apply to special permits. Councillor LeBlanc asked if neighborhood meetings could be held. President McLaughlin asked what could we do better as there are no rule changes with the proposed changes to the special permit process. Councillor LaFauci asked if the petitioner was also a constituent, could they speak with a Councillor. Councillor Katz stated that all Councillors are able to attend a meeting of the Ordinance & Rules Committee. Councillor Harris asked if Council Rule 85 applied to special permits to which Attorney Laughman responded no. Councillor Harris gave a recap of the two changes being sought. Councillor Harris moved to approve the proposed changes to the procedure for special permits. On the motion, Councillor Brasco questioned what we were being asked to vote on – a power point presentation? Councillor Harris withdrew her motion and asked for a brief recess so the Attorney Laughman and Attorney Azadi could draft the motion. Vice President LaCava recessed the meeting at 10:45pm and the meeting was reconvened at 10:55pm. Councillor Harris presented the motion that was drafted by the Attorney Laughman and Attorney Azadi. Councillor Brasco renewed his concern about the impact on Council Rules 85, 86 and 89. Councillor Brasco moved to table the matter. The motion was adopted on a voice vote with Councillor Logan audibly voting no.

7. A motion by President McLaughlin to adjourn was adopted on a voice vote, and the Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 11:05pm.

Paul G. Centofanti – Clerk to the Committee of the Whole