

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING – NOVEMBER 10TH AND 12TH, 2020
5:00 P.M.

An electronic special meeting through Zoom was held due to MDHHS Epidemic Order limiting meeting size and to decrease the spread of COVID-19.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Denner and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

The following were electronically present: Councilmembers Relan, Read, Hodges, Robson, and Fluit, and Mayor Denner.

Also electronically present: Nick Sizeland, City Manager, Jane M. Blahut, Finance Director/Clerk, Jake Howlett, City Attorney, Stephen Poloni, Director of Public Safety, Jim Bostock, Public Safety Lieutenant, Sue Acton, League of Women Voters, Steve Trowbridge, League of Women Voters, and Leah Smith, Assistant to the City Manager.

CANDIDATE INTERVIEWS

Mayor Denner introduced Ms. Sue Acton from the League of Women Voters as the moderator for the interview portion of the process.

Ms. Acton stated that the candidates would be interviewed in two different groups. The first group included the following candidates:

- Dr. Paul Burgoyne
- Mr. Patrick Coletta
- Mr. Graig Donnelly
- Mr. Robert Farhat
- Mr. Lawrence Gannan
- Dr. Jeff Greer
- Mr. Nicholas Gwozdz

The second group included the following candidates:

- Mr. Tim Kolar
- Mr. Thomas Lavigne
- Ms. Darci McConnell
- Ms. Pier King Piepenbrok
- Ms. Mary Rouleau
- Mr. Max Andrew Wiener

Ms. Acton stated that both groups of candidates will be asked the same four questions and will be given one minute to answer. Every candidate will also have two minutes to make an opening and a closing statement. A 30-second warning card will be held up indicating that the candidate has 30-seconds to complete their answer/statement. If the stop card is held up, that indicates time is up and the finalist may finish their current sentence but may not begin a new one. The order of answering the questions was determined by drawing lots before the meeting began.

Following the opening statements by the candidates in each group, Ms. Acton asked the following questions for all candidates to answer:

- Based on your knowledge of the City, what do you feel the top priority should be for the City of Grosse Pointe Park.
- What do you perceive your responsibilities to be as a member of the City Council.
- How do you describe Grosse Pointe Park to people who have never been here.
- If appointed, what would you like to accomplish over the next year.

Ms. Acton asked all of the candidates to make a two-minute closing statement to end the interview portion of the meeting.

Following the second group of interviews, Mayor Denner called for a brief recess to allow City Council to review their notes and decide on their top six candidates.

SELECTION OF FINALISTS CANDIDATES

Mayor Denner called the meeting back to order and requested that the City Council members state their top five candidates in alphabetical order for Administration to track. Clerk Blahut stated the following candidates were the top six selections by City Council:

- Dr. Greer
- Mr. Kolar
- Ms. McConnell
- Ms. Piepenbrok
- Ms. Rouleau
- Mr. Wiener

Mayor Denner stated that he would like Council consensus on how to proceed.

Councilmember Fluitt stated that the meeting should be continued into Thursday because that was the process advertised to the public and the candidates.

Councilmember Robson suggested eliminating candidates with only two votes, leaving six finalists for the second round of interviews.

Councilmember Hodges and Relan stated that all six should be advanced to the second round of interviews.

Mayor Denner stated that the top six will move forward to the second round of interviews on Thursday, November 12th and asked City Administration to contact and release the names of the six finalists, and to also contact the candidates not selected to move forward.

Councilmember Relan requested that the process for Thursday be solidified and shared ahead of the meeting.

Mayor Denner recessed the meeting at 7:40pm.

CALL TO ORDER – THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12TH

Mayor Denner called the meeting back to order at 5pm on November 12th. All City Council members and additional participants were present.

FINALIST INTERVIEW FOR THE VACANT CITY COUNCIL POSITION

Ms. Acton from the League of Women Voters stated that the following finalists were present:

- Dr. Jeff Greer
- Mr. Tim Kolar
- Ms. Darci McConnell
- Ms. Pier King Piepenbrok
- Ms. Mary Rouleau
- Mr. Max Andrew Wiener

Ms. Acton stated that all of the finalists will be asked the same five questions and will be given one minute to answer. Every finalist will also have two minutes to make an opening and a closing statement. A 30-second warning card will be held up indicating that the finalist has 30-seconds to complete their answer/statement. If the stop card is held up, that indicates time is up and the finalist may finish their current sentence but may not begin a new one. The order of answering the questions was determined by drawing lots before the meeting began.

Ms. Acton first asked all of the finalists to make a two-minute opening statement. Following the opening statement, Ms. Acton asked the following questions for all finalists to answer:

- What would you do to fully understand an important Grosse Pointe Park community issue before you undertake City Council action regarding it.
- As a City Councilmember, you will listen to various opinions regarding a concern and/or policy from residents. Please give an example of a situation that demonstrates your ability to make difficult decisions.
- Please describe how you would react to a situation in which the Council voted four-three to approve a very contestable issue and you were on the dissenting side.
- The City of Grosse Pointe Park is a council-manager form of government. Please describe your understanding of the relationship and the role of a Council person in that form of government.
- What services or departments of the City interest you the most.

Ms. Acton asked all of the finalists to make a two-minute closing statement to end the interview portion of the meeting.

Mayor Denner stated that the process will include City Council selecting their top three candidates in no particular order that they will identify alphabetically to Administration. Following the initial top three selection, Council will continue to narrow down the field as necessary until a single candidate rises to the top. Before any voting takes place, Council will hold a discussion to talk about what is important to each Council Member with what they are looking for in their next City Council colleague.

Councilmember Read stated that she would propose still limiting City Council members to three votes but voting by candidate instead of every Councilmember stating their top three as a list.

Mayor Denner accepted Councilmember Read's suggestion and stated that would be the process followed to narrow the field down.

Mayor Denner called for a brief recess to allow City Council to review their notes and determine their top three.

FINALIST INTERVIEW FOR THE VACANT CITY COUNCIL POSITION: COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Mayor Denner stated that he would like individual Councilmembers to state what is important to them and what qualities they are looking for in a new colleague.

Councilmember Robson stated that he was looking for someone who was a team player, thick skinned, a listener, honorable, collaborative, and an individual who understand the difference between City Council and City Administration.

Councilmember Read stated that the most important quality she was looking for was communication skills; listening and being able to articulate a well thought-out response. Also someone who is thick skinned, a team player, and values community engagement.

Councilmember Fluitt stated that she was looking for someone with applicable experience, someone who had goals for the City, someone who demonstrates knowledge about current issues, and someone who is already engaged in the community themselves.

Councilmember Hodges stated that she was looking for someone who appeared to be calm and reasonable. She stated that she also considered what council needs, what skills are needed, and who the voters would choose.

Councilmember Relan stated that he was looking for someone with understanding of how the City and Council operates and what has already been done, someone who values community engagement, and someone who plans to help implement solutions.

Mayor Denner stated that he looking for someone with strong communication skills, a team player/collaborator, and someone who has relevant skills and/or life experience. He also stated that he considered what is already represented on Council and how the holes in representation that are present can be filled.

Mayor Denner asked Clerk Blahut to call the roll for each finalist in alphabetical order and reminded Councilmembers to only vote three times. Ms. Darci McConnell received five votes, the most of any candidate.

Motion by Councilmember Relan, supported by Councilmember Read, to appoint Ms. Darci McConnell to City Council.

AYES: Councilmembers Relan, Read, Hodges, Robson, and Fluitt, and Mayor Denner

NAYS: None

All Members of Council congratulated Ms. McConnell and stated that they were excited to work with her on council.

PUBLIC COMMENT

City Manager Sizeland read 3 written comments submitted by 3 residents.

No residents made verbal comments.

Motion by Councilmember Robson, supported by Councilmember Read, to adjourn.

AYES: Councilmembers Relan, Read, Hodges, Robson, and Fluit, and Mayor Denner

NAYS: None

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:20 pm.