

**THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE FORTIETH COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BERKLEY, MICHIGAN WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:00 PM ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2024 IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS BY MAYOR DEAN**

**PRESENT:** Councilmember Steve Baker  
Councilmember Clarence Black  
Mayor Pro Tem Ross Gavin  
Councilmember Dennis Hennen  
Councilmember Gregory Patterson  
Councilmember Jessica Vilani  
Mayor Bridget Dean

**OTHER STAFF PRESENT:**

City Manager Crystal VanVleck  
City Attorney Jake Mertes  
City Clerk Victoria Mitchell  
Deputy City Manager of Public Services Shawn Young  
Downtown Development Authority Executive Director Michael McGuinness  
Finance Director Carl Johnson

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mayor Pro Tem Gavin moved to approve the agenda.  
Seconded by Councilmember Black  
Ayes: Black, Gavin, Hennen, Patterson, Vilani, Baker and Dean  
Nays: None  
Motion Approved.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Margaret Dobrowitsky, Waterford, spoke on behalf of a Berkley resident regarding lead line replacement documentation.

Michael McGuinness, DDA Director, described the events happening in Berkley over the holiday season.

**Consent Agenda**

Councilmember Vilani moved to approve the following Consent Agenda  
Seconded by Councilmember Hennen:

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:** Matter of approving the minutes of the 40th Regular City Council meeting on Monday, December 2, 2024.

**WARRANT:** Matter of approving Warrant No.1405.

**MOTION NO. M-108-24:** Matter of approving a three-year contract extension and additional addendum for Forestry Services with J.H. Hart Urban Forestry.

Ayes: Gavin, Hennen, Patterson, Vilani, Baker, Black and Dean  
Nays: None  
Motion Approved.

## ***Regular Agenda***

**RECOGNITIONS/PRESENTATIONS:** Matter of receiving any recognitions or presentations from the Consent Agenda.

None

**MOTION NO. M-109-24:** Matter of authorizing the amendment of the 2024-25 budget as presented.

Mayor Pro Tem Gavin moved to approve M-109-24

Seconded by Councilmember Baker

Ayes: Hennen, Patterson, Vilani, Baker, Black, Gavin and Dean

Nays: None

Motion Approved.

**MOTION NO. M-110-24:** Matter of accepting the quarter ended September 30, 2024 budget-to-actual report.

Councilmember Baker moved to approve M-110-24

Seconded by Councilmember Hennen

Ayes: Patterson, Vilani, Baker, Black, Gavin, Hennen and Dean

Nays: None

Motion Approved.

**MOTION NO. M-111-24:** Matter of authorizing the reopening of Dorothea to vehicular traffic in the immediate future, considering upcoming seasonal, temporary closures and public space activation in the short-term, and standing ready to determine the best long-term plans.

Councilmember Patterson moved to approve M-111-24

Seconded by Councilmember Vilani

Ayes: Vilani, Gavin, Hennen, Patterson and Dean

Nays: Baker and Black

Motion Approved.

## ***PUBLIC COMMENT***

Matthew Kasle, co-owner of Bombshell Treats, spoke in favor of M-111-24.

## ***COMMUNICATIONS***

### **COUNCILMEMBER BAKER**

- The Historical Committee did not meet this month; they've been very active with events and activities throughout the holiday season and Merry Month.
  - Members want to thank the volunteers and all who visited the Museum during the Holiday Lights Parade and at other times throughout the last couple of months.
  - For more information about the cool things going on at the Museum and to learn more about our City's history in general, please visit [berkeleyhistory.com](http://berkeleyhistory.com).
  - The DDA met last week; they have put on some tremendous programming and other things throughout the city that were fantastic.
  - There's one more Merry and Bright shopping night this Thursday; the trolley will be bringing joviality and ease of transport throughout our downtown.
- Extended his heartfelt thanks as liaison to the DDA for all that Mr. McGuinness has done in leading, cheerleading, spiritual leading, and the creative expansion of all that our downtown could be.
- Finally, it was W.C. Jones who once said, "The joy of brightening others' lives becomes for us the magic of the holidays." No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted. Please,

especially in the holiday season—but we should do this all the time anyway—be kind to one another, be thoughtful, and please hug somebody you love, especially this time of year.

- The holidays are tough for many folks, those who have lost family members or other incidents and things, and it can be overwhelming at times. Please be conscious of your own health and well-being. Please be conscious of others. Be kind, hug someone you love, and let's root for the Lions. They're going to pull it out; they're going to do it.

#### **COUNCILMEMBER HENNER**

- The Zoning Board of Appeals had no cases to hear in December, but they have a meeting coming up Monday, January 13th at 7 PM in Council Chambers to hear a case on a rear sign for a business on 12 Mile.
- The Tree Board had no meetings in December, but it continues to look for grant opportunities. They have a subcommittee working on that, and its next meeting is January 27th at 7 PM at the Public Safety Conference Room.
- Recently, as a trustee of the Michigan Municipal League, he was able to attend its recent board meeting, he sent a document out to everyone on some of members' accomplishments and the impact they've had in the last year. They've started a Thriving Communities Initiative, and Berkley was chosen to be one of the first three or four communities to participate. One of the central ideas of the initiative is to try and find collaborative efforts that improve the quality of life of our residents; a concrete example of something that fits into that framework is the deal the City struck with the Dad's Club and the schools—that's a benefit for all of the parties—and looking for ways to continue to do that and leverage those partnerships.

#### **COUNCILMEMBER BLACK**

- Thanked Director of Communications Caitlin Flora, who did an outstanding job with the recent donation to the Berkley Cares Food Pantry; he said she's been very instrumental for working with the Committee on Engagement and Transparency.
- Remember this holiday season that military first responders don't get Christmas off. They give us 24/7 effort, so just keep them in your thoughts and your prayers while you're enjoying Christmas.

#### **COUNCILMEMBER PATTERSON**

- The Planning Commission will meet tomorrow in Council Chambers at 7 PM to discuss a daycare application that we've already heard once and will be coming back.
- The Beautification Committee met last week; they decided on the Holiday Spirit Award and it'll be announced soon.
- Thanked Facilities Director Alex Brown. He said when he was at the Lights Parade, there was someone coming in the museum talking about a door not being locked, and Mr. Brown and City Manager VanVleck were already working on it when he sent an email the next day.
- Wished everyone a merry, safe, happy Christmas and holiday season.

#### **COUNCILMEMBER VILANI**

- There are no announcements for the Environmental Advisory Committee; they have not met, and meetings will resume in the new year.
- For the Berkley Chamber, a friendly reminder that the Berk Perk Card is available for \$35. If you need any last-minute gifts for friends and neighbors who live in this area, it's a great way to help them save money all year long. It's also a great reminder to encourage everybody to shop small and support all of our local businesses.
- Gave a big thank you to everyone who supported and volunteered for the Holiday Lights Parade. She said it was a wonderful event, and it was a delight to see all of the new entrants in the parade, really reflecting the spirit and inclusivity of our town.

#### **MAYOR PRO TEM GAVIN**

- The Parks and Recreation Advisory Board met on December 12th at 7 PM at the Community Center.
- The Library Board had no December meeting.

- Gave a heartfelt thank you to Director McGuinness. He said that Mr. McGuinness is an incredible asset not only to his community in Pontiac but to ours here in Berkley. He thanked Mr. McGuinness for all he's done as he continued to make incredible strides and improvements in our downtown.
- Like his colleagues, he said he hopes everyone has a wonderful holiday season and a Merry Christmas.

#### **CITY MANAGER CRYSTAL VANVLECK**

- As Mr. Johnson mentioned, the gaps in our Finance Department have been filled.
- She said we are also well on our way to hiring a Human Resources Director, which will go a long way in helping those processes and procedures that have not been well-established or well-communicated over the years.
- She said her hope is to have somebody in by the new year, and that the City will see a lot of progress just in that new hire.

#### **CITY ATTORNEY JAKE MERTES**

- Thanked everyone for having him.

#### **MAYOR DEAN**

- She said that she and City Manager VanVleck rode the trolley this past Saturday from 1 to 3 PM.
- She said that if anyone saw her social media post leading up to that, she walked into City Hall one day and saw this giant Nutcracker hat. She said she thought, "This could be fun." They took pictures with it and decided to bring it on the trolley. The nutcracker was named "Bob" by a shopper's daughter.
- Thanked everyone who engaged with them on the trolley and shared their Berkley stories.
- She said her next stop on the Mayor's Roadshow is Thursday, December 19th, at Sum Girls Boutique on 12 Mile from 6 to 8 PM. She said Councilmember Patterson will be stopping in, so if residents want to know exactly when he's coming, or to avoid that time, they can reach out to him.
- Legendary filmmaker Stanley Kubrick believed in the power of human will, calling it an incredible force capable of making a meaningful difference even in daunting times. In an interview, Kubrick said, "However vast the darkness, we must supply our own light." As we find ourselves in this season of light, this is the perfect opportunity to reflect upon our place in this community. What do our words, habits, and actions bring to it? Do they offer increased darkness or increased light? The choice is yours. Please make sure the loudest voice—your own—is serving you and those around you.
- She said she is absolutely grateful for the growth and opportunities they have experienced as a Council this year, as well as all they have been able to accomplish.
- She said Council came through tough moments, and she believes they are stronger and they have great leadership in City Manager VanVleck.
- However you celebrate this season of light, she wishes everyone much joy and connection with those you love and a happy, healthy 2025.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

Councilmember Patterson moved to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 7:41 PM

Seconded by Councilmember Baker

Ayes: Black, Gavin, Hennen, Patterson, Vilani, Baker and Dean

Nays: None

Motion Approved.

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Bridget Dean, Mayor

**ATTEST:**

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Victoria Mitchell, City Clerk