

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NOVI  
MONDAY, MAY 24, 2021 AT 7:00 P.M.**

**Mayor Gatt called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.**

In accordance with the provisions of the Open Meeting Act this meeting was held remotely.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ROLL CALL:** Mayor Gatt, Mayor Pro Tem Staudt, Council Members Casey, Crawford, Fischer, Maday, Mutch

Mayor Gatt, present from City of Novi, Oakland County, State of Michigan  
Mayor Pro Tem Staudt, present from the City of Novi, Oakland County, State of Michigan  
Member Casey, present from the City of Novi, Oakland County, State of Michigan  
Member Crawford, present from City of Novi, Oakland County, State of Michigan  
Member Fischer, present from City of Novi, Oakland County, State of Michigan  
Member Maday, present from City of Novi, Oakland County, State of Michigan  
Member Mutch, present from City of Novi, Oakland County, State of Michigan

**ALSO PRESENT:** Peter Auger, City Manager  
Victor Cardenas, Assistant City Manager  
Tom Schultz, City Attorney

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Mayor Gatt added to Mayor and Council Issues, "Long Grass/Weed Ordinance".

**CM 21-05-073 Moved by Fischer, seconded by Maday; CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**  
**To approve the Agenda as amended.**

**Roll call vote on CM 21-05-073** Yeas: Staudt, Casey, Crawford, Fischer, Maday, Mutch, Gatt  
Nays: None

**PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

- 1. Request to Establish a Commercial Rehabilitation District for Sakura Novi, LLC and Sakura Novi, LLC, and Robertson Sakura Novi, LLC. Sakura Novi, LLC under the "Commercial Rehabilitation Act P.A. 210 of 2005."**

Opened at 7:02 p.m. and closed at 7:03 p.m. with no public input.

**PRESENTATIONS: None**

**BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS PRESENTATIONS**

1. Kelsey Dillon- Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission

Kelsey Dillion said she is seeking appointment to the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission. She stated she is a newer citizen of Novi and she wanted to get more involved with her local community. She believed she would be an asset to the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Service Commission due to her current and former professional positions with local and state government parks departments. She noted that she was a park naturalist for Meridian Township for five years for the Parks and Recreation Department. In that role, she wore a lot of hats, her focus was on engaging the community in the Townships beautiful and valuable natural resources. She said she led play space education opportunities for elementary students, presented to homeowners on an invasive species solution for their properties, and organized park beautification and natural area restoration projects. She noted that she managed the two Meridian Township dog parks, organized the entire volunteer program, pitched in to help at the farmers market and large community events such as 5k races, ran the youth fishing derbies and she was the staff person to the Land Preservation Advisory Board and regularly reported to the Meridian Township Board, so she was very familiar with structure and function of local government. Her current position is as a natural resource steward with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation Division. She stated her job is focused on improving high quality habitat through volunteer stewardship program. She said she regularly engage with people of all ages, backgrounds, and skill levels. She stated she is knowledgeable in natural resource management, including invasive species removal and native ecosystem restoration projects. She said she is skilled in the areas of grant writing, land acquisition and installation of native species landscaping. She said she was very passionate about the vital role the Parks Departments play in the success of the community. She has seen it firsthand and chosen it as her career. She said if appointed to the Commission, she will be engaged, well informed, and a passionate advocate of the City of Novi. She thanked everyone for their kind consideration.

## 2. Jay Dooley- Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission

Jay Dooley said he is currently the chairperson of the Novi Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission and has held the position since June of 2013. He stated he has also been a prior chairperson of the Novi Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission from time starting in 2007 through his first tenure with the Parks Department which was through 2012. He said he currently sits on the Grants Committee with various members of City Council and PRCS Director Muck. He said he was instrumental in putting together what he heard it called tonight as the Dooley Dog Day with a past member of the Park's Department. He explained that it is an event that we o every spring and every fall, stands the pandemic where we serve 1000, free hotdogs to every single member of the Novi Youth Soccer, Youth Baseball, their families, and friends. He said it is a great way for us as commissioners on the Parks Department to connect with the City of Novi to connect with various folks that support their children that are part of soccer and baseball. He said it was a fantastic venue. He said they answer questions and take those questions back to the Commission and to City Council, he said it betters all of us. He said that we have a lot of great resources in the City of Novi, he was proud of the fact that in 2009 we were

very instrumental in putting together a review of the various parks in the City of Novi, and it is an event that we continue to do today. He said we are proud of that, as commissioners with the Novi Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission.

### 3. Priya Gurumurthy- Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission

Priya Gurumurthy thanked everyone for giving her a chance to talk about her passion towards the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission. She stated she is a Senior Manager IT working at Yanfeng. She is also part of the Housing and Community Advisory Board as well. She said she was there because of her passion and interest in giving back to the community as well. Number one, she said she is passionate about the parks. She stated that through the Ambassador Program, she learned about the different parks, and her goal has been in the past several years to educate the community on how we can leverage it. She said part of the coaching the robotics team and the Virtual Park Program as well, that was launched in 2020. She said they walk the different trail challenges. Her goal is to bring that back to the community, not just the Indian community, but to all the community that we have beautiful parks around, and then how we can help keep it beautiful around us. She said the second thing is diversity. She is a diversity champion at Yanfeng and affinity chair for a Women's Resource Network. She said when we talk about the cultural activities, she has helped the Library by suggesting a few programs as well. She stated she would like to bring back the cultural portion of the Novi Parks and Recreation. She would like to bring it back here so that she can educate the community, especially friends and family, and the rest of the community on how beautiful the cultural programs that they do already. She said through the Engage Programs as well make sure everyone knows about it. The last item is that being a senior manager she has a lot of program management skills; it is all about the execution. She said she can leverage all the skills to make it happen and then also look at the business value. She said if someone brings a request, then she would make sure to prioritize and make sure we get the best value.

### 4. Supriya Joshi- Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission

Supriya Joshi said she is currently serving on the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission and she is seeking reappointment. She thanked everyone for giving her the opportunity three years ago to be on this Commission. She said she was looking forward to her reappointment for the next three years. She said she learned how amazing the relationship is between this Commission and the amazing Parks, Recreation and Cultural Service Department is, we just saw the amazing work that they have put in for the recent Capra Reaccreditation recommendation. She is hoping that with her next appointment that she could continue to provide her input and here honest and sincere attitude that she has put in for the last three years, the same attitude going forward. She said she is a physical therapist, she looks at a lot of the programs that the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department must offered through a disability access. She said her input is hardly ever needed sometimes because the staff and the department are doing such an amazing job. She is hoping to continue this for the cultural diversity and the disability

population of Novi. She would be honored if she would be considered for the reappointment. Thank you for your time.

5. Lynch, Mike- Planning Commission

Mike Lynch said he has been on the Planning Commission since 2005 and he was willing to commit another three years. He said he has been very pleased with the performance of the Commission. He said he could not take credit for all that, obviously, but he was very happy to see the thoroughness of the Planning staff. He said he thought the group has done a pretty good job and he was willing to commit another three years, if you so choose.

6. Mark Pehrson- Planning Commission

Mark Pehrson thanked everyone for the opportunity to reapply for the Planning Commission. He thought we had a good team, and he was honored to be part of this particular group for a number of years, sitting alongside a lot of people to learn from and he gave recognition to the current Planning staff, Barb, Lindsay and Christian, for the amazing work that they do on behalf of the City to make us look good and present us with the information that we can see to make a balanced decision between harmony of that is needed for the City and what is best for our environment. He said if he was so honored to be reappointed again, he looked forward to the opportunity to work alongside City Council and the members of the staff going forward. Thank you for your time.

7. Ramesh Verma- Planning Commission

Ramesh Verma said he has lived in the beautiful City of Novi for the last 42 years. He said he has come in front of the Council many times for different Boards and Commissions. He said the last was on February 8, 2021. He said he requested to join the Planning Commission. He has been there only three months and attended only three meetings. He said with his experience with that is he found that he is dealing with the very able administrators of the City of Novi, as well as he enjoyed working with members already there. He said he has not seen them personally, but virtually and he enjoyed working with them. He said he does not have much experience yet in the Planning Commission, but he would like to continue to do more for the City. He wished to continue to serve as a member of the Planning Commission and to serve the City. He kindly requested that Council consider him again for the Planning Commission. Thank you.

8. Alexander Weyer- Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission, Planning Commission

Alexander Weyer said he lived in Dumbarton Pines, and has lived in Novi 30 of the 33 years of his life. He was applying for the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission. He said he would like to serve on this commission because he was passionate and driven towards supporting the well being of our community through



engagement with an empowerment from a connection to our local green spaces. He believed he would be an excellent fit for this commission because he was passionate not only about protecting, but also sharing what he found valuable about them with others. He stated the actions he was most proud of in our community over the last year has been the founding of the Novi Growing Together group on Next Door, which is currently at 290 members. He said through the creation of this group, he has gotten a lot out of experience being a community leader by initiating as well as supporting resident led cultural gatherings and events. He has establishing relationships with others over the last year through this group, and he felt he currently help a unique perspective on the needs of our community. He shared some pictures of some neighborhood garden visits that the group hosted last year. He said he led personal and group nature walks within our local parks helping people identify and build relationships with our local flora, something that he would like to do more. In those walks he brought forth his background in an educational experience with native herbal medicine and wild food foraging practices.

Mayor Gatt concluded the presentations for the Boards and Commissions. He said on behalf of his colleagues, he thanked everyone. He said it is a very difficult decision to make. He said everyone was very professional and they all have much to give to our city. He thanked them all very much and asked them to tune in at our next meeting for the ballot results.

**MANAGER/STAFF REPORT:**

City Manager Auger said he sent out an email this morning about the SOS Program and the success we are having with that program that the Council and Mayor requested staff to take on. He stated that we have made over 1015 calls to people 70 years old and above in our community. He said we have also reached out with 78 home visits to people that we were able to contact for a wellness check. He said it was amazing the amount of contacts we have made and the services we have now introduced to some of our residents who did not know we were available to them. We are having some early success in the first month of getting into this and he hoped to continue this trend and report back to you later more successes.

**ATTORNEY REPORT: None**

**CONSENT AGENDA REMOVALS AND APPROVALS:**

**CM 21-05-074      Moved by Casey, seconded by Crawford; CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**To approve the Consent Agenda as presented.**

A. Approve Minutes of:

1. May 10, 2021 - Regular Meeting

- B. Acceptance of a sidewalk easement from Novi Office Development, LLC along the west side of Haggerty Road south of Thirteen Mile Road for the Hillside Investments office building (parcel 50-22-12-200-057).
- C. Consideration of approval of successor labor agreement between the City of Novi and the Police Officers Labor Council (POLC) for a contract term of July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2025.
- D. Approval of a Storm Drainage Facility Maintenance Easement Agreement from Novi Office Development, LLC for the Hillside Investments office building located south of Thirteen Mile Road and west of Haggerty Road (parcel 50-22-12-200-057).
- E. Approval of claims and warrants – Warrant No. 1084.

**Roll call vote on CM 21-05-074    Yeas: Casey, Crawford, Fischer, Maday, Mutch, Gatt, Staudt**  
**Nays: None**

**MATTERS FOR COUNCIL ACTION**

- 1.     **Consideration of approval to award engineering design services to OHM Advisors for Taft Road Rehabilitation, City Limits to Ten Mile Road, and Taft Road and Nine Mile Road Roundabout in the amount of \$235,685.00.**

**CM 21-05-075            Moved by Staudt, seconded by Casey; CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**Approval to award engineering design services to OHM Advisors for Taft Road Rehabilitation, City Limits to Ten Mile Road, and Taft Road and Nine Mile Road Roundabout in the amount of \$235,685.00.**

**Roll call vote on CM 21-05-075            Yeas: Crawford, Fischer, Maday, Mutch, Gatt, Staudt, Casey**  
**Nays: None**

- 2.     **Consideration of approval to award the purchase of outdoor exercise equipment to be located at Wildlife Woods Park to Greenfields Outdoor Fitness in the amount of \$63,313.15, the installation to Michigan Recreational Construction Inc. in the amount of \$34,823, and a \$10,000 contingency fund using a cooperative purchasing contract and to amend the budget.**

City Manager Auger reported that this follows up on the Manager's Report moving this program forward where we are trying to get people interactive and help their mental health is part of exercise and getting out of their homes. He said PRCS Director Muck was there if anyone had any questions about it.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt stated that one of the committee's he is on had a robust discussion about this several months ago. He said this was our recommendation that has been presented tonight.

**CM 21-05-076      Moved by Staudt, seconded by Crawford; CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**Approval to award the purchase of outdoor exercise equipment to be located at Wildlife Woods Park to Greenfields Outdoor Fitness in the amount of \$63,313.15, the installation to Michigan Recreational Construction Inc. in the amount of \$34,823, and a \$10,000 contingency fund using a cooperative purchasing contract and to amend the budget.**

Member Mutch commented on the next two items since they cover the same territory. First off, he said he was fully in support of both items in terms of moving these forward and bringing these amenities to a couple of our neighborhood parks in the city. His one concern was in terms of locations. He said there was some information in the packet about why these locations were chosen. He did not have a particular problem with these locations. His concern, though, is that these are both located south of I-96 and we do not have anything in front of us or anything that has been shared with them that indicates that we are going to have a similar kind of equipment located north of I-96. He thought that is something that is a miss on our part. He thought the intent of this program is to address needs particularly directed towards seniors in our community. He reached out to the good folks at SEMCOG, when this was first coming up in terms of getting some demographic information about them, where seniors are in our community, just to make sure that we were meeting those needs. He said there is a significant senior population north of I-96, of course, quite a few people live at Fox Run. They may not have a pressing need, just because of the facilities they have there. He said there are quite a few seniors who live outside of Fox Run as well, then so he would fully support these, he still thought we needed to find a location on the north end of the city to share that to ensure that we are adequately meeting the needs of the senior residents in our community. Everybody knows the challenges of driving south at the southern part of the city from the north end at various times of the day. He was thinking in terms of fairness, and just meeting the needs of the community we really need to have something north of I-96. Thank you.

Member Maday appreciated Member Mutch's comments. She said she was not an expert on where everybody is living, and she did not reach out and figure out the data. She noted that this equipment also is going to be geared towards people in their 50's, and it is not just for senior citizens, it is for people of all ages that are going to use this. It happened to have been brought up under the SOS Program, but everybody is going to take part in using this, that is her assumption. She thanked PRCS Director Muck and the staff for putting this together so quickly and getting it out today for a vote. It tells you about how she feels about mental health of all our citizens. She thought this is a great step into the way she is thinking and the way she wanted our city to be developed. She said she was in full support.

Member Fischer thought that Member Mutch made a fair point. He stated that one of the things that struck him, in the background information is that this equipment is very mobile, we can up and move this equipment at any time. He thought we were making an investment now. He asked PRCS Director Muck from his perspective, how are we going to track the use of this equipment, and if we need to repurpose it, or move it around, how would we accomplish that. PRCS Director Muck replied that Member Fischer was completely correct. This equipment is portable, it would just require a new concrete pad or pads being poured for the machine. He stated that if we, as park staff in our park's maintenance team identify that we do not believe the use is there at Rotary Park these could easily be transported to another location, and the Rotary Park restored. Member Fischer suggested that in a year we can get feedback from you. He said he was in full support as well. Thank you.

Mayor Gatt asked PRCS Director Muck how they will track the use. PRCS Director Muck said that will have to be visuals and spot checks. He thought we are going to have a lot of traffic especially at the Wildlife Woods Park with the pickleball courts also being installed. He said we will have a lot more eyes on that park. He said Rotary Park will be a little bit more of a challenge to track, but we can work that out with making spot observations as our staff go their rounds.

**Roll call vote on CM 21-05-076**

**Yeas: Fischer, Maday, Mutch, Gatt, Staudt, Casey, Crawford**

**Nays: None**

3. **Consideration of approval to award the purchase of outdoor exercise equipment to be located at Rotary Park to Greenfields Outdoor Fitness in the amount of \$25,053.75, the installation to Michigan Recreational Construction Inc. in the amount of \$16,994, and a \$4,200 contingency fund using a cooperative purchasing contract and to amend the budget.**

**CM 21-05-077**

**Moved by Crawford, seconded by Maday; CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY**

**Approval to award the purchase of outdoor exercise equipment to be located at Rotary Park to Greenfields Outdoor Fitness in the amount of \$25,053.75, the installation to Michigan Recreational Construction Inc. in the amount of \$16,994, and a \$4,200 contingency fund using a cooperative purchasing contract and to amend the budget.**

**Roll call vote on CM 21-05-077**

**Yeas: Maday, Mutch, Gatt, Staudt, Casey, Crawford, Fischer**

**Nays: None**

4. **Consideration of Approval of the request of Robert B. Aikens & Associates, LLC and Robertson Brothers Homes, for Sakura Novi, JZ19-31, with zoning map amendment 18.732, to rezone property from Office Service (OS-1), Office**

**Service Commercial (OSC) and Light Industrial (I-1) to Town Center-1 (TC-1) subject to a Planned Rezoning Overlay (PRO) Agreement, on land located north of Grand River Avenue, south of Eleven Mile Road in Section 23, together with approval of the PRO Plan and PRO Agreement. The applicant is proposing to develop a mixed-use development with retail, restaurant, and office uses and up to 132 multi-family residential units on approximately 15 acres of land.**

Phil Kim representing Sakura Novi said he wanted to say a few words. He thanked City Council again for this opportunity. He wanted to take a moment to present a case to the City Council. He stated it has been a long process to fully grasp what it takes to develop the first Asian themed Mixed-Use development in the City of Novi, also the Metro Detroit area. He said from the beginning of the project, the Sakura team initiated the necessary efforts to increase the nationwide awareness of this unique characteristic of the City of Novi. We have reached out to major Asian international businesses to introduce them to the City of Novi and the Metro Detroit area. He stated that after much effort and time, these businesses are seeing the value of having a presence in Novi. We have seen exponential growth and interest by many organizations. He said some of these concepts have already expressed strong interest in joining Sakura. He mentioned that some of them could not wait and have already opened or are in the process of opening another series in Metro Detroit. He said others are waiting for a project to finalize in this City. He said the duration of a lifestyle urban center takes times, that is what they have learned. It takes a lot of experience and proactive investment to provide a compelling business case for businesses to include Novi as part of their expansion plans, or even as a first location for their concepts. He said three plus years spent planting those seeds is finally coming to fruition. He stated with a positive outcome from years of development work was also marred with unrelenting challenges. He explained the land cost, Brownfield condition and loose soils, the cost of the PRO, building up the pond, the premium development, the devastating impact of the pandemic in our lives and the rental industry, the current economic cost, the astronomic cost of construction and materials. It makes new development almost nearly impossible. He stated the traditional scenario would have been enough to pull the plug on an average development. He said this is not an average development. The Sakura team has made a firm decision to tackle this unique opportunity as the long-term benefits of this project outweigh these challenges in our opinion. He said therefore we are still here to move the project forward. We are hopeful that the City leaders concur with this perspective and that the City will partner with us to enact PA 210 to make this vision for the community achievable. He believed that the community impact to downtown Novi will see the typical effect of a traditional Mixed-Use center. Sakura Novi will be a model for an inclusive and cultural modern living experience designed to positively enhance urban life experience. Sakura Novi is a critical step to the Master Plan vision. A great City that evolved over many decades to attract international businesses and residents that provides the fundamental elements to make this vision a possibility. He said we have seen a strong interest in support from people in businesses outside of Novi as well, which we conclude that this project and similar future potential developments in downtown Novi could have a major destination impact in the Metro Detroit area. He said not many cities can be in such a vulnerable position. He stated this is not a project for the short sighted, but for the ones



that can see the long-term benefits to the City and are willing to commit to it. He said we started this project with a normal real estate business strategy with a unique twist. Over the years, it progressed into something more encompassing, where potential legacy can have a profound long-term impact in the lives of current and future Novi residents. He said you have succeeded in convincing us, the businesspeople, that this is more than just a retail residential project. To achieve this level of long-term impact, it requires a participation of all who will benefit from this endeavor. It cannot be solely put in one party to carry the weight of creating such a vision project like this, it requires the support and partnership of a City to make it possible. He asked respectfully for support from Mayor Gatt and City Council.

Scott Aikens representing Sakura said he would take a few minutes and make a little statement. From the beginning of the Sakura project his passion has been to use his retail leasing experience to curate an impactful restaurant and retail collection for the community. He said he has always seen this collection as the anchor of the project. He stated based on what we are observing coming out of the pandemic, he echoed Phil's comments and we believe there is a surge in interest from major Japanese, Korean, and other Asian domiciled food and beverage concepts to locate in Michigan, as well as from best-in-class regional operators. He knew of multiple operators currently securing deals in Troy already open, and now looking at this site in Novi, as well as other sites along Haggerty Road restaurant corridor. He believed the prospect of a collection of such operators under Sakura Novi banner, integrated with the pond gardens and other project components will be much more impactful for the Metropolitan Detroit area than having these operators diffuse along Haggerty Road. He also believed the creation of this collection aligns with Novi strategic interests. He said based on the passion we have seen in the community and what we are see coming in the restaurant space, he sincerely believed your community would grieve passing on this opportunity as this wave of innovation sweeps across Michigan. He asked that they understand, as you contemplate their plans that this truly is an exciting opportunity. However, we need the rezoning and control of the land to start making deals and negotiating leases. He stated experienced brokers will not otherwise proceed. He said Rochester Hills Mayor Bryan Barnett and Oakland County Commissioner Adam Kochenderfer will vouch along with his team have worked hard over many years to bring a top of class collection to the village of Rochester Hills to serve norther Oakland County. The village is gaining momentum, as is evidenced by a recent round of press including a feature article and today's issue of Crain. We have no reason not to bring the same diligence and care to curating a uniquely impactful and fashionable collection in Novi. He was confident the location, the showpiece restaurant collection, upon the gardens, the site amenities, we will combine that to attract other fine uses. He said in addition to the restaurant collection, we will focus on beauty and wellness concepts, home goods, and fashion, a public facing professional services such as financial planning or portrait studio, things like that.

Jim Clark, President of Robertson Brothers Homes said they were there that evening with a final plan. He said it is not substantially or even minorly modified after the loss of a One World Market tenant. He thought Scott and Phill have brought together a very good collection of potential tenants. He said they have worked hard with City staff to finalize

at least their comments on a PRO Agreement, which memorializes all the benefits to the city and will result in if they had a positive decision that evening, a land closing and environmental remediation of a toxic site, building demolition, soil stabilization, mass grading, and utility infrastructure installation. He stated that a positive vote would end this lengthy process and jumpstart if he could use the phrase, it has been three years, moving this forward. He stated they were ready to turn what we see is an eyesore into an asset. He said there are a lot of pieces in place. He understood it has been a long process, but they do have preliminary engineering that has been submitted and reviewed and they do have final wetlands approval for the project. He said they have PRO language approval; they do have a Brownfield submission. He stated they have done and hopefully you have heard from several neighbors on the neighborhood engagement with the Asian concept. He said last, but not least, you have a development team that is standing here ready to put the final process in place and start construction which is what hopefully this Council is ready to do.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said hopefully this is the end of the long journey, he was looking forward to supporting this development. He said he had several questions that were going to be very pointed, and potentially very painful. First, he said he wanted to talk to City Attorney Schultz. He asked in the event the PRO passed that evening, what is the next deadline. City Attorney Schultz said the next deadline would be the closing date in the Sixth Amendment, which is why actually the next deadline would be satisfaction of the conditions to closing. He said the development approvals, which is June 21. The deadline for closing is 30 days after that, in July. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt thought we received information from staff and that it is virtually impossible to think that all tax abatements, Brownfields, and site plans will be completed by that day, can the applicants still close? City Attorney Schultz said that question may be better directed towards Mr. Aikens or Mr. Clark, but there is a fair bit left to do and sort of less than 30 days. He guessed our expectation was, and the staff report notes that there might be a need to extend that if they are going to proceed with getting those approvals. He guessed they could waive those under the agreement. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said at this moment he would continue to address questions towards City Attorney Schultz. His third concern was if the applicant purchases the land, can you give us a general overview of what the basis would be in terms of initially tearing down buildings and how long do they have to do that? He stated that most importantly, to him, the wetlands mitigation, and the lake cleanup? City Attorney Schultz replied if you look through the PRO Agreement the timing aspects start on Page 5, and spill over all the way to Page 7. He said essentially, the intention is that they would, upon closing, submit applications to demo what is on the property now right away within 30 days, and then as soon as those permits are available and have been granted by all the required authorities, then they have 60 days to do that demolition, the clearing and land balancing starts then, the environmental remediation also starts then, and that would include at least under their current Brownfield plan cleaning up the lake, with the intention being that within a year he believed. He said within six months of the completion of the demolition, the intention is that all the environmental remediation will be done. He said they can clarify if they want, but the expectation is that some of the clearing and balancing would happen along with that. He said then presumably they would be looking for development

approvals in that final section, construction of the buildings for Phase 1-A, Phase 1-B, and Phase 1-C, within 90 days of the remediation with the intention that this all starts within a year or gets underway with actual bullet improvement and site improvement within a year from the date of the agreement. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt asked for clarification on the issue of the environmental cleanup beginning that you said something about dates, and you talked about permit availability. City Attorney Schultz said on Page 6, the section relating to environmental remediation there to do the remediation in accordance with the Brownfield plans which as we know are not finalized at this point but have been submitted to the County. It says developer shall complete the environmental remediation set forth in the Brownfield plan within six months after the later to occur of the issuance of all applicable permits for such remediation and the completion of the Anglin partial demolition. He stated six months after they get all the permits, they need to move the land around and do the work that they need from the state or from the Anglin parcel demolition. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt asked are these permits, what is the general length of time for the permits to be approved. He asked Community Development Director Boulard if he would like to answer that question. Community Development Director Boulard replied, he stated the reason that this section is written as it is, is because there are things outside of the City's control. He gave an example; utility disconnects for franchise utilities. For example, we cannot issue a demolition permit for a building that still have active gas service. He explained the environmental would need to have for example, for the wetlands, you need to have our local permits and state permits. He said we can control what is ours, those will take place and be approved typically with the final site plan for that phase, but that would need to be in place before we start doing work near the wetlands. City Attorney Schultz said we can turn around and control what we can control, as far as those from the state, we can make sure they apply and diligently prosecute, we cannot issue those. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said in other words, we do not have any idea when the wetlands cleanup would begin, because we cannot control the permits on that, the final permits that some of those are coming from or state agencies. City Attorney Schultz thought that we have a general idea that we are within the expected tolerance, but these go out a little further if possible, yes. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said this question has not been asked yet, he wanted to ask City Attorney Schultz first, before the applicant. He wondered if the City was obligated to provide any additional extensions to the sales agreement. He said it is not obligated to provide that now. He said if the applicant cannot close at the date of sale, is the City's responsibility to the applicant have been completed? City Attorney Schultz said yes, he thought the way he framed it would be accurate. He said we must approve or deny the PRO Agreement tonight, once that is done, if for example you approve that, then the next items on the agenda are things that either need to be satisfied by them or wait. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt confirmed that the June 21 date is pretty much the deadline. City Attorney Schultz said give or take away that with the way the agreement is phrased. It is an automatic termination unless it is extended. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said that was all the questions he had for City Attorney Schultz. He stated that Mr. Aiken has heard the comments of our City Attorney relative to then pan closing date. He asked if the Brownfields, the abatement, the 210, and the site plans are not approved at that time, will you be able to purchase a property? Mr. Aiken said he would have to confer with his team, which would be with Jim Clark. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt

suggested that they talk about it that evening and suggested they may want to go offline and talk about it, because he thought it has a tremendous bearing on his vote and others. He thought that answer is, you know, we have made it very clear from previous meetings, that this was the final agreement, sales agreement, extension that they were going to provide. He said if there is any question about it, he thought he was giving them that information. He said he thought the City Manager is probably made it clear, and he personally would not vote for another extension. He said they had a big decision to make. He stated that at this point if you are not going to be able to provide that answer, based on what he heard from the City Attorney, if it is not done by June 21 this agreement is going to be terminated with the City. He said if this agreement passes this evening, we have done everything we have promised from the first day on. His second question was regarding some language in the PRO Agreement relative to an Asian theme development. He wondered if it was his vision and desire to have that be at least 80% or larger on the commercial and retail portion of that development? Mr. Aiken replied larger on the restaurant collection, and then it is sort of an augmenting lineup on the non-restaurant retail. Mayor Pro Tem Staudt clarified that he said for the restaurant portion greater than 80% and maybe some of the other things a little bit less. Mr. Aiken replied yes.

Member Mutch had a couple of follow up questions regarding the timeline of how the agreement is structured, relative to when things happen. He said as he was reading this, the first phase talks about the demolition of the buildings, the land clearing and land balancing, completion of the environmental remediation, and then it also includes pretty much all the building activity. The phases are sub phases, Phase 1-A, Phase 1-B and Phase 1-C, which used to be the market building, and then all the residential, except for a small piece that could potentially come later and then improvements to the pond. Is there anything that would preclude for instance, one of those sub phases getting completed in advance of other things being done or is there a clearly defined order in which all these things take place. City Attorney Schultz said they have an intention to do site work and then Phase 1-B residential essentially at the same time they are building Phase 1-C by the Grand River frontage. He said the agreement was not written in a way that anything is required to be first or second or third, not at least with a deadline or dates or anything like that. He said if they can satisfy the City Administration that a particular area has been completed well enough so that it can be occupied and stand on its own. The agreement does generally allow that in some ways. He hoped that was okay. Member Mutch said he appreciated that. He said his biggest concern about what they were being asked to approve, because he will just put it out there, he thought we have all watched this project evolve over time and things have happened, we have COVID which was a huge piece of that. He said the developers had no control over that. He said One World Market walking away and choosing to expand in a different location, he did not know how much control they could have had over that based on things are unfolding. He said the residential component is becoming the main component of this project, and he did not have a problem with that per se. He stated he thought he has probably been the most supportive of allowing the higher density, he did have some concerns about the environmental impacts of it and the on the one portion of the property. He said overall, he has not had an issue with the residential piece, he thought



it was important for this project. He also thought it was very important for this area of the city long term, we need to have more people living in this area to support not just this project, but some of the other surrounding areas that, frankly, are struggling significantly. Having said that, he did not want to see this project become is a residential project with some commercial pieces tacked on. He felt like that is where this project has evolved to. He understood that the dilemma that the security team faces, you are in an environment, we are coming out of a pandemic, folks are not going to commit to something, maybe in the way that they would have in the past, there is going to be a lot of hesitancy and financing issues and what have you. He said at the same time, we had a vision for this area, it was of a vibrant, mixed-use development, that were all these pieces were tied together. His big concern is that a year down the road, or at whatever point if we move this process along, we will have the residential piece and we will not have anything else other than the things that they are absolutely obligated to do. He was also concerned that the city, he will not be her the year down the road, but whoever is sitting in this seat, and obviously residents and taxpayers, that there will be a significant portion of this project not done and commitments not completed and have no mechanism in this agreement or any of the agreements, we have to make that happen in the fashion that we want to see it happen. He said that is what was holding him back at this point. He mentioned another issue for him right now is something he brought up at the last meeting where we discussed this project previously is a lack of financials from the city side in terms of the impacts of these various requests, in terms of the Brownfield which there has not even been started, we do not even know for sure what that is going to cost or how that will impact the city's revenues, the list request for a commercial rehabilitation exemption, which he had a serious problem with in terms of the residential side of this property and why in the world there is a compelling argument for that, that is a real concern. He stated that we have all these potential financial things laying out there that we just don't have any information about and he asked about this the last time, he said it was going to be critical to his support for this going forward. He said the response back that they had in their packet from City Administration is that they did not have that information to provide at this point. He said he was going to be hard pressed to support moving this forward at this point with those gaps. He said they are real gaps from his perspective in terms of the financial perspective from the city side and this flow of development on this property and then what we could be looking at a year or two years down the road in terms of having a half-completed project versus something that we were really looking for.

Mayor Gatt jumped into the discussion and said maybe it would be a little bit different than the previous speaker. He said he has been part of this project, there has only been a few of us that is on Council right now that has been part of this project from the beginning. He said he still has the vision, and he still has the hope and desire to see Sakura built. He said it is easy just to say well, you know, we had a pandemic, and it just kind of brushed that off. He said this a worldwide once in a lifetime, once in a century, is that has created chaos among the building industry amongst everybody and everything. It just seems that we may be coming out of it now. He hoped so. He said Michigan it seems that we are and for the first time around his office, and in his circles of friends there seems to be some hope. He said there seems to be some livelihood, there seems to be some



glimmer of sunshine and he did not want to brush that off as something that we are just well, we had a pandemic. Mr. Aikens and his group were faced with something that no developer in his lifetime has ever had to be faced with and yet here we are coming out of it. They are presenting a possibility of Sakura becoming a reality. Mayor Gatt said the previous speaker was talking about a couple of years from now, it might be this or it might be that, okay, let us pretend that we turn it down. He asked what it is now, it is a piece of dirt. That is an eyesore in the middle of our beautiful city, right near downtown, and we know how many great things are happening there. He said he did not want to see that two years from now, and he hoped to be here two years from now. He said he did not want to see that, he wants to see Sakura, he wants to see an Asian village in whatever form we can get. He said Mr. Aiken talked about an 80% restaurant commitment and the way I hope, the way to see all the Asian people contacting him, and many of his colleagues last week, there seems to be a lot of interest from the Asian community to develop on this property. He thought as COVID leaves we are going to see more and more interest. He said as far as financials he said if it is closed, and that is the big if, and he said we will face that question in another month, but if it is closed the City of Novi, the taxpayers of which we are all taxpayers and residents, will get \$3 million plus for the property. A commitment from the developers that they must decontaminate that lake which is over a million dollars, and we are going to have a over \$4 million dollar investment into our coffers almost immediately. He felt that was a good return on our actions that evening, so he was in favor of this. He said he would not be in favor of an extension. He was a little bit surprised and disappointed in Mr. Aikens when you said earlier that you must confer with your partners. He thought that maybe you have, or he suspects that they already have or know the answer. He said maybe you do not want to commit, and he understood business and that is okay. He said when it comes back to us for an extension, if it does, if it passes tonight, he will have a very difficult time saying yes to an extension we have already made that very clear. He said as of tonight he was excited. He thought that we were on the cusp of coming out of this. He said before and he will say it again, Novi is unique, Novi is different, Novi is better. He thought that they are going to come out of this bigger and better than most of our surrounding communities. He said he was familiar with Rochester, the village, he was familiar with what is going on there. He is friends with Mr. Barnett, he believed in your reputation, he believed in Robertson Brothers, he believed that his is going to be, if it happens, a unique and very beautiful development. He said he was in favor of moving this forward.

Member Fischer wished he could share the Mayor's hope and optimism, but unfortunately, he did not think he could. He said Member Mutch had hit on a couple points that he was going to make as far as the phasing questions. He asked City Attorney Schultz, cutting to the chase, could we get to a point where the residential is built and no commercial is built, and someone is walking away from the property. He asked what the penalties or remediation on our part if that happened. City Attorney Schultz said theoretically, you could, there is no order of construction in the agreement with enforceable dates, they are obligated to start Phase 1 which is a commercial and Phase 1-B and Phase 1-C withing generally, a year. He said the agreement does not spell out a particular timeframe for which development gets built first and made representations to you, of course, he for reasons not to think those are intended. He said the only thing

he would add, and maybe he should have added to his comments to Member Mutch, once the construction starts on this project, there is not going to be anything else built on the commercial portion of the property other than what they have agreed to build in a PRO process. He said you are either going to get your commercial development or they will have to be in front of you for something else. Member Fischer said the PRO runs with the land, but there is no commitment from a future. There is nothing in the PRO about 80% Asian restaurants or anything like that, it is just intentions that are being talked about in a public meeting, is that correct? City Attorney Schultz said there is no specific timing. Member Fischer said there was a lot of discussion about this environmental and he directed his question to City Manager Auger. He always pointed out this city bought this property for \$3 million. We have already outlaid \$3 million for this property or approximately \$2.8 or \$2.9 million. We knew going in we had a Phase 1, Phase 2, we knew eyes wide open, there was an environmental impact on this property. He asked if that was factual. City Manager Auger replied yes, that was correct. Member Fischer said so now we may have a development, we may have a situation where there is the Brownfield being done, and we talked about getting it cleaned up, that \$850,000 that is referenced in the sales agreement, that ends up being funded by taxpayers does it not? City Manager Auger replied that it gets reimbursed off the taxes that they pay going forward for any remediation that they do. Member Fischer said they do remediation, they are out the money now, and then over time, as the city through the county reimburses them up to \$850,000. City Manager Auger said that was correct. He explained it is always taken out of taxes that they end up paying. That is where it comes from. He said it does not come out of the City General Fund or something of that nature. Member Fischer said that was correct, it is reduced future tax revenue to us. It is not cashed out of our bank today. He said he got that point, but it is forgone, that \$1,850,000 that would have been in our coffers that we could have used to invest in roads and the Parks and Recreation. City Manager Auger said yes, that was correct. Member Fischer said that is before we even get to the 210 CRD discussion is that correct. City Manager Auger said yes, that is correct. Member Fischer reiterated Member Mutch's point that we do not even have the information on what that financial impact will be. He stated if we look at the financial impact, as you know the City has already made a \$3 million investment, and they are going to make another \$1 million dollar of investment. We do not even have protections in this PRO Agreement that ensure that the commercial is going to even happen. He did not think it is going to come as a surprise to anyone that, since he voted against the tentative agreement, but he said it back then every iteration of this project setting tends to be less of the original vision than the prior one. He said we are now at a point six months after our last approval, where we do not have One World Market anymore. He stated there were a couple of PRO items like the community room, that has been eliminated, and the phasing has changed, where there is no commitment that all those commercials are going to take place. He said he has not seen any strong commitment other than kind of vague generalities about, the commitment that the food and the entertainment and the service, the Asian aspect of that will be included in any of this. He said what has gone from beautiful rendering and a beautiful vision, signed with two languages, a complete ambiance is now boiled down to a PRO that talks about, kind of just an intention to have some design elements of contemporary Asian and Asian American retail atmosphere. He personally thought that the language is kind of insulting

and from a perspective of, if we as a City Council think that is going to protect us and ensure that this creates an Asian village, then he has a bridge in Brooklyn to sell us. He stated he was in high school 20 years ago and there was this topic of a Main Street being developed in Novi, and this whole concept of if you build it, they will come, we are 20 years later, and we are still trying to develop Main Street. He said he thought we are getting this development and what we have been dealt with the last four years, this is going to be the next Main Street for Novi. He said he would not be in support of the PRO Agreement.

Member Casey said the last time this was in front of us, just back in January, she was also a no on the tentative approval. She noted at that time she felt like we had lost kind of what was making this development a special place, a special destination to come. She had concerns that we had too much residential in that space. She also thought within that development there were too many changes, we are continuing to see changes that still come through. She said right now she was going to add to that she is still feeling too much uncertainty, she said she could empathize with the position that you are in, she completely understood it, but she was challenged now. She stated we still do not know to some of the previous speakers still do not know that the Brownfield is going to go through, we have an idea of what it might cost. She said from a tax perspective, we are not sure commercial rehabilitation district what that cost is going to be, so those are open questions and just too much uncertainty for her. She said frankly, you know, even as wonderful as this conversation has been, she still has not heard anything that has changed her perspective, she wished them great success. She said she had not heard anything that evening, and did not see anything in the drafted carrier agreement that really made her confident that this is going to be the development that they were expecting it to be, and again, not because she doubts any of the ability of you, or any of the players here, she was not sure that we are in a place where we are going to be where we want to be in one year, two years, five years, or 10 years. She wished them luck. She looked forward to them proving her wrong, if you will, but at this point, you still do not have her support to move the PRO Agreement any further.

Member Maday said she was on Planning Commission and heard about this project then. She said she had a different perspective than everybody here that has been going back and forth with the developer on this. She said she wrote down a list of all the pros, in her opinion for this and you know, the eyesore of the building is going to be gone, the land is going to be cleared, it is going to be developed for future land, environmental contamination is going to be cleaned up. She said she realized that it is going to be on a tax basis, but it is going to be cleaned up, and it is going to be ready to go for whomever wants to purchase it. She said the pond is going to be cleaned up and that is another part of Novi's green space, we are adding to our green space. She stated if the developer makes it as good as the pictures, it is going to be an incredible piece of property for all our residents, not just the residents that are going to be living there in the apartments. She was not opposed to the residential units either, because we need people in that area, we need people to come together in that area to develop that area. She was not opposed to that either. She said the sidewalks are going to be connected. She said the one question she had for the developer is if they knew when

the pond cleanup would be done. Will the Asian themed gardens be done before, during, or after the construction. She believed someone could answer that questions. Mr. Clarke replied to the question. He said City Attorney Schultz outlined basically the timeline, we will get demolition permits, we are not going to do environmental remediation until we have demolition. He said it follows a logical path, we will get utility shut offs, and will proceed with demolition of the buildings, and environmental remediation. The next step would be soil stabilization. He said this has been a difficult process, we would not have had half of these discussions, if you were not the seller, you are both the seller and the approving body. He said everybody here that is questioning Robertson Brothers 70 years of history and Akin 70 years of history. He said you know this is not a virgin piece of property. It has major economic implications with it and if you want to keep you \$3 million piece of property and spend the other \$3 or \$4 million that they were proposing to spend in the first phase, the best thing that could happen is we fail, and you have a spanking clean, new piece of property that you only pay \$3 million dollars for. He said construction costs on our townhouse's today are up \$30,000 on just lumbering cutting materials cost increases. He said he did not want to cry the pandemic blues, but they have stood by this city in this project through all sorts of things and you stood by us. This tis the wrong time to scrap this project and go back out and see if there is somebody better than Robertson Brothers 70 years of history, or the Aiken's 70 years of history with specialty retail market. He said there are no other developers who are going to do this. He said he guessed he was no prepared to close if we do not get something to help us with 40 foot of uncompacted fill, maybe you guys know how to build on fill that we do not. He said they were not looking for gimmies to line their pockets. They are trying to cover costs on a terribly challenge piece of property. He said half of its wetlands and we already have wetlands approval, they have submitted our Brownfield prep plan, we are ready to talk about the CRD and we are ready to move forward. He said he was happy to answer more specific questions, but you are at the gross leasable area is the same. He said we just do not have One World Market because they could get it for 50 cents on the dollar and that was a smart business decision. He said Mr. Aikens is committed to the Asian theme. We have the Asian community that is support of it. He said they are disappointed that there is so much uncertainty with two very qualified developers, one of which is currently working in your city and building a wonderful community up in the North end of Novi. He said he was sorry for his tirade, but it has been three years. City Attorney Schultz said directed to Member Mayday's question earlier, the recreational amenity in the pond area that you asked about is part of Phase I-B. He said that is the first residential area, which presumably is likely to be the first thing. Member Maday said that is what she was looking for and thought that is one of the pros for this. She thought that the community deserves to have that pro up front rather than waiting, however long it is going to take to have the whole thing developed. She asked the developer for clarification, maybe she did not understand it, but at the pond, the building, the 1800 square foot recreation building that is going to be developed, do you have an idea of what you envision that being used for? Mr. Aikens said it is like a little park in a playground, recreational amenities. Member Maday asked if it was a building? Mr. Aikens so no, it is like a multifamily playground environment you know, and that is all that is going to be done. He said this is the beginning phase. She said she did not thing it would be right to wait on that one. She stated she was in support of this project.



Mayor Pro Tem Staudt made a couple of quick points. He said he liked when everybody harkens back to Main Street and the failure of it, considering that he is sitting in his office right now with another probably another 100 businesses in this building. He did not consider Main Street to be a failure. He said it has been difficult, but he truly believed that as time goes on here, we are going to see some successful businesses. He said there are several in here already. He said he was ready to make a motion. He thought this needs to move forward. He has heard what his colleagues had to say, he thought they covered this, this is just frankly, a difference of opinion. He said his opinion is that his development, has great potential and does have some risk. He stated he has spent his whole career in risk business, and he heard Mr. Clarke and Mr. Aikens tell him that they are making substantial investments in their companies and sell, he believed that what they are going to deliver is going to be very favorable for Novi.

**CM 21-05-078            Moved by Staudt, seconded by Maday; MOTION CARRIED: 4-3**

**Motion to grant *conditional* approval of the request of Robert B. Aikens & Associates, LLC and Robertson Brothers Homes, for Sakura Novi, JZ19-31, with Zoning Map Amendment 18.732, to rezone property from Office Service (OS-1), Office Service Commercial (OSC), and Light Industrial (I-1) to Town Center-1 (TC-1), subject to the attached Planned Rezoning Overlay (PRO) Agreement, the corresponding PRO Plan, the conditions of this Motion, and the conditions listed in the staff and consultant review letters, and also subject to any changes and/or conditions as discussed at the City Council meeting, with any final minor alterations required in the determination of the City Manager and City Attorney to be incorporated by the City Attorney's office prior to the execution of the final agreement.**

**This motion is made for the following reasons, and only upon the assumption that all conditions and requirements of this motion and the PRO Agreement, including but not limited to the approval of the Brownfield Plan and addressing the Corridor Improvement Authority and other items listed below, will be satisfied:**

- 1. The proposed neighborhood-scaled, mixed-use, pedestrian accessible development would be in line with the intent of the 2016 Master Plan, or a reasonable alternative thereto. Developer indicates that the proposed development complements the 2016 Master Plan vision for a unique, well designed, mixed-use facility.**
- 2. Sakura Novi, as a unique development, would reinforce the vision of the 2014 Town Center Area Study, namely by creating a *dynamic, attractive city core that provides residents and visitors with unique opportunities to participate in active community life, and meet their needs for goods, services, housing and entertainment.***



3. **The proposed Sakura Novi, as a collection of restaurants, retail, and possible office uses is anticipated generating 170 permanent jobs.**
4. **The proposed residences at Sakura Novi will provide smaller footprint, middle-market rate residential rental offerings. The new homes would be a draw as temporary living opportunities for professionals and their families drawn to the City for work or other cultural reasons, as well as the large corporations that sponsor many of these families.**
5. **The developer indicates that the proposed Sakura Novi will reinforce Novi's tax base beyond the project itself by creating a platform that can foster partnerships among the City of Novi, cultural institutions and the corporate community. An example provided is the partnership with the STAMPS School of Art and Design at UM, and the Japan America Society to create a Japanese themed illuminated applique (a back-lit piece laid over glass, proposed to be located on Building C facing Grand River).**
6. **The development will create a park-like environment around the existing pond, including a walking path around the pond and throughout the site, available to the general public. Landscaping treatments, the pathway, and a play area at the edge of the pond will "activate" the pond. These efforts will foster walkability and connectivity within an important corner at the heart of Novi, as well as potentially energize other areas in the Town Center core.**
7. **For all of the foregoing reasons, the proposal will result in an enhancement of the project area as compared to a "straight" TC-1 designation, and will result in significant benefits to the public that would not otherwise be available with a straight rezoning TC-1, and the deviations listed are necessary to secure the enhancements listed above and in the PRO Agreement.**

**This motion and this approval are also specifically subject to and conditioned upon the following:**

1. **This PRO approval shall not take effect until the following *additional* actions or approvals occur as contemplated in the Conditional Agreement for Purchase and Sale between The City of Novi and Sakura Novi, LLC, (the Conditional Agreement) dated June 21, 2018, as amended:**
  - a. **Final approval of a Brownfield Redevelopment Plan and Act 381 Plan by all applicable local and state agencies, upon terms and conditions acceptable to the City.**



all the commercial. Member Fischer said he made his point clear, but he was just trying again, to protect the city as to what he considered to be some weak language and, in the PRO, so he will leave it to the motion maker.

Mayor Gatt said before he called for a vote, he did not know how this was going to end up. He said if it passes, as he said during his comments, he did not think he would be agreeable to an extension. He stated if this is approved, he hoped that in the next report, June 21, you, and your partners will come to a conclusion whether you are going to move forward with or without agreements.

**Roll call vote on CM 21-05-078**

**Yeas: Gatt, Staudt, Crawford, Maday**

**Nays: Mutch, Casey, Fischer**

**CONSENT AGENDA REMOVALS FOR COUNCIL ACTION: None**

**AUDIENCE COMMENT:**

Sergio Fernandez commented everybody is talking about this project. He stated that he works in Livonia for a construction project management company. He said he lives in Clinton Township, and he commutes every day. He said everybody is worried about the residential part of this project. He thought you guys are missing a little bit of what is in front of you, just all the businesses and the development. He said it is almost like you do not go into business and try to build a casino to make the most revenue out of our rooms that are booked. He said this is a huge opportunity for the City of Novi. He brought up the point and wondered what the initial order was. He said to produce your plan for rezoning or a mixed use, if you want it to do on your residential, then you will have to rezone the area, it is already residential. He pointed out on the garden that is going to be provided on this area. He said that is just that you will have a completely different setup. He did not think it exists in any other part, at least in Michigan, what they are trying to do in this project, but he will support this project. He said he is looking forward to seeing all the development obviously with the years, but you have a whole plan already. He thought it is going to bring a pretty good interest from our part from the country. Thank you for your time.

Laurie VanPelt said she came out of retirement today just to tell you thank you for supporting this project. She said she knew you know America. She knew that the Member Crawford knew that. She said she did not know if the rest of Council knew that she is half Japanese. She is very familiar with Mayor Gatt and Councilmember Crawford from her longtime at the County. She stated she was an appointee of L. Brooks Patterson and he asked her to be part of this even through economic development was not formally under her. She said he asked her to participate just based on her ethnic background. She said about three years ago she had the opportunity to go to Japan as part of the Japanese American leadership delegation. They choose about 10 every year pre COVID. She said they met with the Prime Minister and a princess. She stated while she was there, she was able to talk about how exciting this project was. She said it was on the drawing board at the time, and Novi received a lot of attention during her visit to

Japan at that time. She said they had people from Chicago, Japanese Americans come in to look at that area, some attorneys who have Japanese clientele from your businesses along the Grand River Corridor and up along Haggerty Road. She said they came in and met with City Manager Auger and they keep asking about it. She said she was supposed to be on a zoom meeting for the Midwest, US Japan Council that evening, but she explained to them that she wanted to listen to this and give her support. She said the people in Chicago are very excited. They are only a half a day's drive away. She said they are looking for opportunities to expand their networking within Michigan. We have more Japanese nationals in Novi than they have in Chicago. She pointed out that the Japanese nationals, a lot of the wives that come over with the businessmen, they do not speak English. They are very excited about his mixed use residential and primarily restaurant atmosphere because they like to walk to restaurants and walk home because they do not feel comfortable having cocktails and driving. She said this has been very much anticipated. She thought it is a good thing that One World Market is staying across the street, because she thought that you will truly have a corridor there that will rival Little Tokyo in Los Angeles and Japan town in San Francisco, she has been to both. She said she grew up in the San Francisco area. She personally thanked Council for approving this because she looked forward to going there and sharing this with her friends and family. Thank you very much.

Cynthia Yang said she is a resident of the area who is super excited to hear this Sakura of Novi might be coming. She thought it will be a great addition not only to Novi, but to the Metro Detroit area, she has been waiting for something like this for a very long time. She said she has friends who live in Novi and the surrounding cities, they are all looking forward to it, they will be regular visitors. She said it will be beneficial to the cultural diversity of the area. She said she has visited many Asian themed villages and districts in other cities, it is always vibrant and bustling. She stated that they attract not only visitors from the local community, but outside of the city and the state, she thought this would be a great addition to the area and do not underestimate word of mouth. She thought there will be many retailers interested in coming to the area. She asked the Councilmembers to be a little more patient because this sounds like this project will be of great magnitude. She hoped that we can move forward with this.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt wanted to make everybody aware that the Broadband Committee had a preliminary meeting with Willy Mena and they set some ground rules. He said they have some great speakers that we are lining up and we intend to meet again shortly to set up our first public meeting. He said there is so much discussion to be had and he thought the outcome of this is going to be very exciting. He wanted to give everyone a little head up.

#### **MAYOR AND COUNCIL ISSUES:**

Mayor Gatt said he added "Long Grass and Weed Ordinance" to Mayor and Council Issues. He stated over last year and now starting again this year he has received a couple

of emails, and even a phone call from one of his colleagues on City Council regarding some grass that needs to be cut from a person who travels through Novi. He said he knew we have an ordinance, and we have an enforcement team that are out there doing their job. His desire, his thought for bringing this forward is there seems to be a lot of red tape involved. He said when we see somebody grass on their property is over a foot tall, we must give them a notice and then we must wait seven to 10 days, weeks can go by before any action is taken. It is certainly not the City's fault. He said that is the way the ordinance is written, and he suggested as a member of the Ordinance Review committee that the Committee meet as quickly as possible to look over that ordinance to see if there are some tweaks that we can implement to make the city's job easier to act quicker. He said in a matter like this, if you live across the street from or next door to somebody who for whatever reason, has not cut their grass in a month or so, you too would be upset. He was not asking for any action; he was just saying that his will come up before the Ordinance Review Committee. He hoped that we can come back to Council with something that puts some teeth and some quickness in our ordinance.

Mayor Pro Tem Staudt said there are multiple, and we are not talking about dozens and dozens, but there are homes in our city that appear to be abandoned at times. He said he is very aware of one in his subdivision. We have another that somebody passed away a year and a half ago and we did things to clean up their property. He said the following year we had to initiate more complaints. He stated we need a better way of dealing with these properties. He was not sure what the answer was, he was sure the Ordinance Department have their thoughts. He suggested we have a spreadsheet of people where the house is abandoned, and we have had to do things in the past. He said this stuff is really irritating to the neighbors and we need to do a far better job, he said we are good at enforcing some things, be this is one that we need to move up a few priority levels. He said he is on the Ordinance Review Committee with Mayor Gatt and they are going to look for suggestions from Community Development Director Boulard's team and hopefully we will come up with something that can put a little bit more teeth into the ordinance and allow us to escalate it much quicker.

**ADJOURNMENT** – There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:42 P.M.

  
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Cortney Hanson, City Clerk

  
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Robert J. Gatt, Mayor

  
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Transcribed by Deborah S. Aubry

Date approved: June 7, 2021