



## **General Government & Social Services Committee**

January 15, 2019

### **Summary and Motions**

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Vice Mayor Kay called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Committee members Moloney, Ellinger, J. Brown, Lamb, Farmer, Evans, F. Brown, Reynolds, and Plomin were present. Council Members McCurn and Bledsoe were in attendance as non-voting members.

#### **I. Election of Committee Chair / Selection of Vice Chair**

CM Plomin nominated CM Lamb to be the chair of the committee; CM Lamb agreed to serve as chair. There were no other nominations.

A motion was made by CM Farmer to elect CM Lamb as chair, seconded by CM Plomin. The motion passed without dissent.

CM Lamb said that she would like to select CM Evans as vice chair of the committee; CM Evans agreed.

#### **II. Approval of October 9, 2018, Committee Summary**

CM Farmer made a motion to approve the summary. The discussion of the motion included the following comments. CM Farmer and CM Lamb clarified the status of the parliamentary discussion as well as the changes made to the council rules and procedures relative to boards and commissions.

A motion was made by CM Farmer, Jr. to approve the October 9, 2018, General Government & Social Services Committee Summary, seconded by CM Plomin. The motion passed without dissent.

#### **III. Election Day Voting, Future Needs**

CM F. Brown welcomed the Fayette County Clerk, Don Blevins, Jr. and explained that he placed this item in committee because of feedback he received from his constituents about their voting experience, as well as his own voting experience, particularly how long people waited in line.

Blevins started his presentation recalling the voting fiasco in Florida in 2000, which sparked a movement towards electronic voting. He said Fayette County bought new voting machines with the wheel based selection tool in 2005/2006, noting the other option at the time was a touch screen. He said about 75 percent of their machines are 13 years old, the other 25 percent varying in age. He said they are having more problems with more machines each year, particularly in the last three years. Blevins reported all precincts have at least two machines and many have more, with a total of 286 precincts and 160 voting locations. He said there are well over 1,000 pieces of equipment and 1,300 election officers. He pointed out Lexington's 237,000 registered voters and mentioned the challenges that a 20 percent failure of machines during a presidential election would cause.

Relative to the 2018 general election, Blevins referenced the length of the ballot and how that doesn't explain all the problems. He reported a five percent increase in voter turnout, from 47 percent to 52 percent. He pointed out the increase in Lexington's population and the number of registered voters and calculates a net increase of 25,000 voters since 2014. He concluded that the age of the voting machines

is the real problem, not the 2018 election itself. He discussed how the county is trending back to paper ballots and the comfort of having a paper backup, emphasizing that it is time to replace the machines. He explained there are two vendors that can fill the order to replace the machines and estimated a total cost of \$2.9M (pre-bid price) for the capital outlay project. He said there is \$965,000 left over from the Help America Vote Act that will directly apply to the cost of new machines. He also mentioned other state-level funding may be available that to help offset some of the cost. He reviewed additional costs that will accompany the new machines, including an annual cost of about \$120,000 for software maintenance, the cost to print ballots per election (about \$40,000 for the general election and \$15,000 for the primary election), and ongoing costs of about \$50,000 to program the machines each election. Tammy Fagley, President of the League of Women Voters, finished the presentation saying the League of Women Voters supports the transition to paper ballots.

CM Moloney asked about early voting and referenced how Lexington was a leader with the seatbelt law. He asked if we can think outside the box and encourage early voting. Blevins said no, particularly because it would require a change in state law and possibly in the constitution. He said the Fayette County Clerk's Office does in-office absentee and that the sole reason an individual can vote early is if they will be out of the county on Election Day. Blevins said there is evidence that early voting does not increase turnout and said it would be very expensive to do. CM Moloney said it works well in other states and it could help solve some of the problems that accompany voting.

CM Farmer asked if a paper ballot would make voting faster. Blevins said yes, he explained that each precinct would still require two machines but how more people could vote at one time. He highlighted the machines abilities to help disabled voters and efficiencies to read the ballots. Farmer asked about the turnaround time for the results and Blevins said he estimates it would take a similar amount of time with the current machines. Blevins said we need to move to paper ballots to ensure accuracy and preserve the public's trust.

CM Plomin asked if precincts are evaluated by voter turnout. Blevins said yes, he explained how machines are distributed and how extra machines can be added to a precinct. He added that state law requires votes to be separated by precinct, which is why that can't put multiple precincts together to share machines.

CM Bledsoe asked how many machines we have and Blevins explained there are well over 1,000 machines. Bledsoe asked how they are stored. Blevins said the current machines are in a warehouse and the new machines will require a temperature controlled environment. They discussed the possibility of phasing in new machines and the challenges that come with a phase-in.

CM Evans pointed out a logical way to phase new machines could be based on voter turnout and asked about predicting the budget for paper ballots. Blevins said the budget would be very predictable like it is now, and mentioned that most of the state uses paper ballots. He said state law requires you to print the number of ballots that is 10 percent more than the voter turnout of the last presidential election. CM Evans asked about the various issues affecting voting and the Kentucky County Clerks Association's position on these issues. Blevins said paper ballots will lesson long lines because more people can vote at one time; he noted state law requires employers to allow employees four hours for voting but how fear of reprisal deters some people from asking for that right. Blevins explained he strongly opposes phasing in new machines.

VM Kay asked why early voting would be more expensive. Blevins said it would require multiple locations because his current office could not accommodate the number of voters, plus staffing requirements. He added that he is aware of studies that say it does not increase voter turnout. Kay said he would like to see the information about voter turnout. They discussed the mail in option, which is being done in Oregon and Blevins expressed his concerns about a mail-in ballot.

CM F. Brown said he liked the idea of a phase-in and said he would like to see more specific cost estimates. He asked how many new machines would be needed. Blevins estimated 310 machines. CM F. Brown also asked about disabled and seniors and the difficulties they have waiting in line. Blevins pointed out there are other ways those individuals can vote.

(46:10) CM Ellinger clarified the number of machines needed is 610; Blevins explained 310 of each type of machine was used to calculate the cost and that the \$2.9M estimate includes other costs. Blevins said this is a budget request for FY2020 and the new machines would be used in the 2020 primary election.

CM Lamb said emphasized the need for the Fayette County Clerk's office to be involved in discussions about a new city hall, particularly because of the storage space needed for new machines. Blevins said they are thinking about their space needs, including space for the records within both the county and council clerks' offices, which he said does not have to be downtown. Lamb asked about the cost and type of paper used with paper ballots. She asked about the type of machines that are federally and state certified. Blevins reviewed the two vendors that meet our requirements and said it would likely be a competitive bid process. CM Lamb asked how the machines were purchased in 2006 and Wes Holbrook said he believes they were bonded but he would have to confirm. Lamb asked about financial support from the clerk's office and Blevins said they do not have any funds available to contribute to this capital project.

CM Moloney asked how long the bonds were issued for compared to how long the machines last. Holbrook said most of their bonds are for 20 years and explained how they try to pay off the principal amount within the useful life of the asset. CM Lamb asked if Blevins has heard anything from his clerk colleagues about the longevity of the machines and he said Louisville used their machines from 1999 to 2017 and that 10-12 years is a reasonable guess.

No further comment or action was taken on this item.

#### **IV. Explorium PSA**

Lee Ellen Martin, Executive Director of the Explorium, provided some brief history of the museum. She reviewed their nine galleries, noting that the *What's New Room* is a rotating exhibit. She said they have about 40,000 visitors each year and 10,000 off-site participants at schools, events, etc. She highlighted their current board members, who help with fundraising. She reviewed their strategic plan, highlighting both short term and long term goals. She said LFUCG makes up 30 percent of their budget and explained the larger revenue sources and expenses. She highlighted the services they provide LFUCG, including booths at various events. Martin said their current lease will expire in 2023. She noted the impact of the increase in sales tax and pointed out the places where they have raised prices to increase revenue. She mentioned the adult only night at the museum as their annual fundraiser, other non-traditional revenue sources, and ideas to bring in additional revenue.

Additional time for the presentation was approved by the committee. Martin showed pictures of their newer exhibits. She concluded the presentation reviewing the Explorium's needs, highlighting needed exhibit upgrades such as the bubble room, future exhibits like a climbing feature, as well as necessary facility upgrades including new windows and bathrooms.

CM Plomin asked about the \$9 cost and how that compares to other activities in the community for kids. Martin said she believes it's cheaper than the for-profit and that the cost is less than what it costs the Explorium per child. Plomin asked about their staff and volunteers, which Martin explained there are three full-time employees, her position that is part-time and part-time employees who run the floor that is often college students. They discussed what the capital campaign would cover, such as exhibit maintenance. CM Plomin pointed out the development expense will increase during a capital campaign.

CM J. Brown said the Explorium has been very responsive to his council office and he thanked them for their work. CM Reynolds asked about the Explorium's plan to improve existing exhibits, ensuring they are fully operational. Martin explained how they had some challenges and that they are working on those improvements; she pointed out that some exhibits are challenging to fix and staffing limitations have a role in this as well.

CM Farmer asked about the Explorium's need for new windows and if the facility is historical. Martin said the facility is historic but that new windows would have to be custom made because they are all non-standard sizes; she added that the cost estimates she provided are preliminary.

CM F. Brown asked about the competition in Lexington. Martin distinguished the Explorium from the Living Arts and Science Center and explained that places, where families spend disposable income, are their competition. He asked about the museum being self-sustaining and a plan for the non-profit to pay for itself, he mentioned the idea of a new facility versus leasing their facility and the timing of new exhibits. Martin noted how they have been historically subsidized. She said the committee that is evaluating a capital campaign is considering the question about their current location or a new facility. She added that they are constantly working to minimize the amount of their budget that is subsidized.

CM Moloney asked about scholarships for low-income families, particularly for the more immediate surrounding neighborhoods. Martin reviewed the scholarships they offer. She said that she has not looked at the impact of raising the admission fees since they raised them in July. CM Moloney mentioned Mayor Gorton's goal to dream big and the Lexington Senior Center and how he sees potential in the children's museum but he emphasized partnerships.

CM Bledsoe also emphasized the value of partnership with other groups with similar needs, maybe partnering multiple groups who need museum-type space. CM Lamb asked about the six vacancies on the board. Martin said they are open seats. CM Lamb said the council should encourage their constituents to get involved in the Explorium Board. No further comment or action was taken on this item.

## **VII. Items Referred to Committee**

CM Lamb noted the annual status review of the committee referrals, which reviewed a brief history of the items. She said once the committee chairs have been established, the chairs should discuss if and

when this review should be included in our packets. The council parliamentary committee item was assigned to CM J. Brown.

A motion was made by CM F. Brown to remove *election day voting, future needs* from the committee, seconded by CM Ellinger. The motion passed without dissent.

A motion was made by CM F. Brown to remove *gun legislation resolution and HB 463* from the committee, seconded by CM Evans. The motion passed without dissent.

A motion was made by CM Moloney to remove *LFUCG employee evaluation process* from the committee, seconded by CM F. Brown. The motion passed without dissent.

A motion was made by CM F. Brown to remove *Lexserv system update* from the committee, seconded by CM Plomin. The motion passed without dissent.

A motion was made by CM Plomin to remove *Council Rules and Procedures Review Subcommittee* from the committee, seconded by CM F. Brown. The motion passed without dissent.

A motion was made by CM Farmer to adjourn, seconded by CM Plomin. The motion passed without dissent.

The meeting adjourned at 2:48 p.m.

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2/5/18