

MINUTES OF COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MAY 21, 2024

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THE WEST VALLEY CITY COUNCIL MET IN REGULAR ELECTRONIC SESSION ON TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2024 AT 6:30 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST VALLEY CITY HALL, 3600 CONSTITUTION BOULEVARD, WEST VALLEY CITY, UTAH. THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AND CONDUCTED BY MAYOR KAREN LANG.

THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS WERE PRESENT:

Karen Lang, Mayor
Lars Nordfelt, Councilmember At-Large
Tom Huynh, Councilmember District 1
Scott Harmon, Councilmember District 2
William Whetstone, Councilmember District 3
Jake Fitisemanu, Councilmember District 4

ABSENT:

Don Christensen, Councilmember At-Large

STAFF PRESENT:

Ifo Pili, City Manager
Nichole Camac, City Recorder
John Flores, Assistant City Manager (*electronically*)
Eric Bunderson, City Attorney
Sam Johnson, Strategic Communications Director
Ken Cushing, IT (*electronically*)
Travis Crosby, IT

OPENING CEREMONY- COUNCILMEMBER LARS NORDFELT

Councilmember Nordfelt asked members of the Council, staff, and audience to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING HELD MAY 14, 2024

The Council considered the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held May 14, 2024. There were no changes, corrections or deletions.

Councilmember Fitisemanu moved to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting held May 14, 2024. Councilmember Huynh seconded the motion.

A voice vote was taken and all members voted in favor of the motion.

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COMMENT PERIOD

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Wendy Finau introduced herself as a small business owner, writer, single mom, and survivor of suicide loss. She explained that she lost her mother to suicide when she was nine years old and now volunteers as a suicide prevention advocate within the Granite School District. Wendy advocated for those who feel voiceless, like her mother, and emphasized the importance of balancing mental and physical health. She shared her personal journey of healing and how it taught her this balance. Wendy encouraged students to prioritize self-care and find inspiration, noting that while many students are inspired by sports, others find deep inspiration in the arts, particularly theater. Wendy highlighted the values imparted by theater, such as inclusion, cooperation, and responsibility. She referenced Rachel Harry, a distinguished theater educator and 2017 Tony Award winner, who emphasized the life lessons taught through theater. Wendy urged the Council to consider the importance of preserving the arts in their community. She pointed out that Sandy City's Hale Center Theater generated significant economic benefits and suggested that West Valley City could also create a cultural hub, inspiring its residents and boosting the local economy.

Zachary Garrett, a junior at Hunter High School in West Valley City, expressed his concerns about the closing of the West Valley Performing Arts Center. He shared that last summer he participated in the Youth Theater Arts summer camp at the center, an experience that initially he resisted but ultimately found transformative. This camp helped him prepare for his auditions at Hunter High, provided him with valuable mentorship, and boosted his confidence. Zachary emphasized that the camp's impact was significant enough that he had already enrolled for the upcoming summer, along with some friends. He praised the beautiful, historic building and its educational facilities, arguing that closing it would be detrimental to the community, particularly for students like him who seek local theater education opportunities. He highlighted the importance of keeping the center open to provide a local venue for growth, development, and the pursuit of their passions. Additionally, Zachary mentioned being inspired as an audience member at the center's shows and expressed his aspiration to perform on the same stage one day. He concluded by urging the Council to make the right decision and keep the West Valley Performing Arts Center open, noting its role in inspiring and providing opportunities to the community.

Laura Leavitt, the school director at American Preparatory Academy, West Valley, spoke about her deep connection with the West Valley Performing Arts Center. She shared her personal history with the building, beginning from her youth when her family moved to Utah and regularly visited the center, which she described as a magical place. She expressed her sadness when it closed and her delight when West Valley City created the new Performing Arts Center. Laura emphasized the

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significant role West Valley City played in providing valuable resources for its citizens, highlighting the center as one of those contributions. She pointed out that her school serves a high-poverty population with many English language learners. After the center opened, her students attended a field trip there, which left them inspired, motivated, and dreaming of new possibilities. She stressed the importance of the arts for everyone, not just the affluent, and praised the center for making high-caliber arts accessible to many. Laura recounted how, during the center's opening weekend, she took advantage of free tickets to a show, which impressed her and her husband so much that they bought season tickets for subsequent years. Laura described the building as iconic and unique in Utah, advocating for its preservation as a valuable part of the West Valley City community. She concluded by thanking the council for their efforts and urged them to reconsider the decision to close the center, emphasizing its benefits to all.

Sawyer Dunroe shared her experience as a seventh grader given the opportunity to intern on the show "Shakespeare in Love" at the West Valley Performing Arts Center in February. For three months, she dedicated every available hour to the center, despite a busy schedule, which included being on a swim team, playing water polo, taking dance and acting classes, learning to play drums, and being a vocalist in a rock band. Sawyer expressed her love for theater, emphasizing how it builds community, fosters friendships, and teaches essential skills like public speaking. She highlighted that although she had performed at various theaters, the West Valley Theater was her favorite due to the inclusive and respectful environment provided by the director, producer, performers, and other professionals. She recounted spending over 40 hours at the theater during her spring break, enjoying every moment and learning new skills daily, particularly in theater technology. Sawyer shared how she assisted the sound engineer and helped run sound during the actual show, contributing to the production team and performers to create something beautiful. Sawyer concluded by expressing her pride and gratitude for the opportunity, noting that none of this would have been possible without the West Valley Performing Arts Center.

Shelley Pace from District 3 implored the Council to protect the West Valley Performing Arts Center. She shared her first memory of West Valley City, which involved visiting the beautiful theater about 20 years ago, sparking her love for theater. When the theater reopened under city management, she felt immense pride in her city's investment in the arts. Shelley expressed her admiration for the high-quality productions at the center, stating that she is a proud season ticket holder and monthly donor. She cited a city audit that praised the performing arts center for providing the highest quality community theater in Utah and noted that it was scheduled for a major overhaul to ensure its longevity. She emphasized the importance of the strategic plan for West Valley Arts, highlighting the long-term benefits of building and maintaining such a program. She mentioned the

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community's remarkable willingness to support the theater through funding and volunteer work, which gave her hope that the center's future could be secured. Shelley also shared her personal safety concerns, recounting incidents of break-ins, car crashes, and shootings in her neighborhood. Despite these challenges, attending events at the arts center gave her a sense of hope and belief in the community's potential to create beautiful things together. She stressed that fostering a sense of community is crucial for reducing crime and providing a safe space for youth. Shelley concluded by addressing remarks about non-residents' voices during public comments. She underscored her understanding of the challenges in running a large city and her willingness to accept certain inconveniences for the greater good. However, she passionately urged the preservation of the theater, which gives her hope, strength, and a belief in her ability to contribute positively to her community.

Walt Sorenson, a lifelong resident of West Valley City from the Highbury neighborhood, voiced his opposition to the proposed GPZ-5-2023 surf park in Highbury. He characterized speculative developments like the surf park as detrimental, citing examples of similar projects across the West that have failed to benefit local communities. He argued that the developer's projections and impact studies for the surf park were flawed, potentially leaving the city with an empty venue. Walt contrasted the surf park proposal with the efforts to save the West Valley Performing Arts Center, which he described as a positive development. He emphasized the importance of the performing arts center as a foundation for the city's economic value and community engagement. Walt asserted that strong anchors like the arts center are essential for attracting and retaining residents, and for fostering economic development. He acknowledged the challenges in preserving the performing arts center but called for collective effort to find solutions. He urged the city to tackle immediate problems while setting the stage for long-term success. Walt appealed to the mayor and the city council to demonstrate pride, unity, and progress by supporting the arts center. He concluded by asking the city to rally behind the cause and preserve what he considers a jewel of West Valley City.

Mike Markham discussed an incident from a previous meeting where he spoke about hockey. Mike acknowledged that his use of certain terminology, specifically referencing a piece of women's swim apparel, had offended someone. He offered a direct apology to the individual who was offended, stating that it was not his intention to cause offense. He admitted that he would avoid such terminology in the future and expressed a willingness to listen to others and perhaps gain more cultural sensitivity. Despite his apology, he also conveyed a sense of bewilderment and slight frustration over the incident, suggesting that he found it surprising that such a comment could be offensive.

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Randy Lucero spoke about noise issues caused by Western Gardens' events, which have been disturbing the peace in his neighborhood near 4100 South and 4000 West. Despite wearing hearing aids, Randy described how he had to resort to earplugs due to the loud noise late at night, particularly on Saturday evenings. He mentioned that the noise starts around 7-8 PM and continues until 10 PM, disrupting the tranquility of the community. Randy expressed frustration that his complaints to West Valley officials had not resulted in any action, even though the noise was loud enough to be heard blocks away and vibrated the windows of his house. He highlighted the discrepancy between state and city noise ordinances and his difficulty in finding a resolution. Despite his concerns about the noise, Randy reminisced about his early memories of West Valley City, recalling its transformation from dry farms to the developed community it is today. He concluded his remarks by reaffirming his fondness for West Valley City and thanking the council for their time.

Sarah King Flinton, a social worker specializing in at-risk adolescents in West Valley City, emphasized the profound impact of community theater on mental health. She highlighted that traditional clinical office visits often fail to effectively engage teenagers and adults struggling with depression, anxiety, ADHD, behavioral challenges, and suicidal ideation. Sarah cited numerous research studies that support the therapeutic benefits of participatory theater. Sarah shared personal anecdotes from her clients who participated in community theater, recounting their significant positive transformations. She stressed the importance of maintaining community theater in West Valley City, especially in a state where suicide is the leading cause of death for individuals aged 10 to 24. Sarah referenced research from the University of Pennsylvania, which found that arts and culture, particularly in diverse communities, significantly improve health, safety, and well-being. Benefits included reductions in child abuse, obesity, and serious crime rates, as well as improvements in academic performance. Sarah concluded by emphasizing that community theater is more than just entertainment; it is a vital tool for resilience, healing, and positive social change. She urged the council to prioritize supporting the West Valley Performing Arts Center, as it plays a crucial role in fostering a healthier, safer, and more inclusive community.

Scott Bohn expressed concern regarding traffic safety in his neighborhood. He reported that despite submitting a request for a traffic and speed survey in March, the survey has not yet been conducted. Scott highlighted the increased traffic congestion on his street, due to the opening of an auto mall. This has led to numerous cars parking on the street, creating hazardous conditions. Scott recounted a recent incident where he narrowly avoided hitting a child who ran into the street chasing a ball. Despite driving under the speed limit, he encountered speeding vehicles and individuals racing minibikes on the street. Scott pleaded with the council to expedite the traffic survey process to address the safety concerns in his

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neighborhood. He emphasized the urgency of the situation, expressing fear for the safety of children playing outside and urging the implementation of traffic calming measures such as speed bumps. Scott appealed to the council members representing his district and at-large to prioritize the issue and take action to ensure the safety of residents, particularly children, in the neighborhood.

Eddie Garcia expressed his strong opposition to the closure of the West Valley Performing Arts Center. He shared deeply personal reasons for his protest, stating that the theater had been instrumental in helping him through difficult times. Eddie recounted losing two close friends to car accidents and feeling on the verge of suicide. However, attending shows at the Performing Arts Center with his stepmother provided him with solace and support during those dark moments. Eddie emphasized the profound impact that theater has on people, especially in providing comfort and teaching valuable lessons that cannot be easily conveyed through other means.

Eve Garcia emphasized the significant impact of the West Valley Performing Arts Center on local businesses. She highlighted conversations she had with business owners while putting up posters for an event at the theater. According to Eve, these discussions revealed that when people attend shows at the theater, they also visit nearby restaurants, contributing to the local economy. Eve stressed the importance of the theater as a reason for people to come to West Valley, which ultimately translates into profits for businesses in the area. She expressed her intention to continue these conversations with business owners to understand the extent of the theater's impact on their bottom line. In conclusion, Eve underscored the importance of the theater to the community and pledged ongoing support for its preservation.

Councilmember Will Whetstone expressed gratitude for the numerous emails, phone calls, and comments received regarding the West Valley Performing Arts Center. He acknowledged that the message from the community was loud and clear, stating that he heard what they were saying. Councilmember Whetstone described the issue as a "math problem" that needed to be solved, indicating the complexity of finding a solution. Despite not knowing what the solution might be, he expressed his enjoyment of attending productions at the theater over the past two years, crediting the community for making him a fan of theater. He also shared a personal anecdote about his daughter's involvement in theater at Hunter High School, describing her as an amazing performer. Councilmember Whetstone emphasized the importance of finding a solution to the issue surrounding the theater and expressed his willingness to listen to potential solutions.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Upon motion by Councilmember Harmon all voted in favor to adjourn.

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THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS OF THE WEST VALLEY COUNCIL THE REGULAR MEETING OF TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2024 WAS ADJOURNED AT 7:03 P.M. BY MAYOR LANG.

I hereby certify the foregoing to be a true, accurate and complete record of the proceedings of the Regular Meeting of the West Valley City Council held Tuesday, May 21, 2024.



Nichole Camac, CMC
City Recorder