New City Council Members Have Similar Priorities

Carolyn Jackson and James Pierce Will Be Sworn in Jan. 5

BY DEBBIE TOWNSEND

New Edina City Council Members Carolyn Jackson and James Pierce plan to focus on some of the same key issues after being sworn in Jan. 5: managing change, promoting equity and increasing public understanding of government actions.

They replace Mary Brindle and Mike Fischer, who chose not to seek re-election. Both newcomers admire the work of their predecessors and are grateful to be joining the three other experienced members: Ron Anderson, Kevin Staunton and Mayor Jim Hovland.

Since the November election, they’ve been getting up to speed, including attending several orientation sessions that began in December to learn processes and meet City staff. Both are eager to get to work.

“There’s a group of people who want to go back to the 1950s. We can’t go back to the 1950s. Change is going to happen whether we like it or not. What we have to do is manage it,” Jackson said. “We are going to manage it in Edina style: It will be interesting, it will be smart and it will work well.”

The 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update, a process led by residents including Jackson, will be key in guiding that growth and change, she said.

Pierce, a commercial business development executive at Cargill, plans to keep in mind all Edina residents as he evaluates projects. “I can’t just look at the project and think of the cost and the business side of it. I have to view it as if I lived on that street or in that community or in that situation,” he said.

Jackson, a licensed attorney, devotes her time to her family and to multiple community improvement efforts, including serving on the City’s Energy & Environment Commission. Pierce received a 2019 Mayor’s Individual Service Commendation for his leadership on the City’s Race & Equity Task Force. The City has been enacting Task Force recommendations across departments. Jackson said people’s faces lit up when she mentioned the topic while campaigning, saying they want Edina to be welcoming.

As part of equity, both new Council Members are big proponents of affordable housing so seniors, workers and young families can find a place in Edina. While campaigning, Pierce found himself explaining affordable housing encompasses a lot more than federally subsidized programs like Section 8. Making issues and the City’s actions on them understandable and transparent is a focus for both Jackson and Pierce.

Jackson plans to ask a lot of questions – in terms everyday residents would use. “I view my role as ensuring we explain things in simple language,” she said. “‘What does this mean for my life and the City? How does this affect an ordinary person?’” Pierce plans to listen and explain, so people understand even if they disagree with a City Council decision. “My hope is more people say, ‘OK, I felt heard. I understand why you are thinking the way you are. … I maybe would have taken a different position, but I support your decision and how we got here.’”

Reach Jackson at cjackson@EdinaMN.gov or Pierce at jpierce@EdinaMN.gov.

City of Edina Goals

Look for the budget goal icons throughout this publication to read stories about how the City is working to meet these goals.

Strong Foundation: Maintain physical assets and infrastructure.

Reliable Service: Maintain service levels that best meet the needs of the community.

Livable City: Plan for connected and sustainable development.

Better Together: Foster an inclusive and engaged community.
Get Alerted to Potential COVID-19 Exposure
COVIDaware MN App Improves Contact Tracing

BY KAITLIN GAULT

An app on your cellphone can help identify if you have been near someone with COVID-19. The COVIDaware MN app was developed to notify users of exposure so they can take preventive public health measures, like getting tested or quarantining.

More than a dozen states have been using the technology, originally developed through a partnership between Google and Apple, to improve contact tracing.

Key components of the app are security, privacy and reliability. Personal identifiable information does not leave a phone that’s using the app. A phone will remember the other devices it “meets” using Bluetooth technology, but personal information is not identified to anyone. Your phone and the phones you encounter will anonymously communicate in the background, even when the app is not open, which helps preserve battery life.

The app conducts daily checks for positive cases. If you’ve recently come within a 6-foot radius of a positive case for more than 15 minutes, the app will notify you with further instructions from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) on how to keep you and the people around you safe.

If you test positive for COVID-19, the MDH will provide you with a code to enter into the app during a contact-tracing interview. People are not able to enter a positive case without a code, ensuring dependable data and timely information.

“This app is designed to notify people if they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for the virus,” said City of Edina Community Health Administrator Jeff Brown. “This can be especially helpful if people can’t remember who they have been around or if they have been around people they do not know, like at a grocery store, which makes traditional contact tracing difficult.

“Contact tracing is important to help limit the spread of the virus by notifying those who were exposed to a person testing positive. It helps people take preventive steps to avoid infecting others.”

The app can be downloaded at no cost in the iPhone App Store or Android Google Play Store. After the app is downloaded, follow the prompts to enable notifications and Bluetooth. In a few easy steps, you will become more aware of potential exposure for your family and your community.

To download the app or learn more about how it works, visit Covidawaremn.com.

BY THE NUMBERS

Public Works Crews On Call 24/7 to Clear Snow

When a big snowstorm arrives, Public Works calls for an “All-Out Plow.” Whether it’s 3:30 a.m. or 7 p.m., 33 plow drivers respond to begin clearing streets, alleys and parking ramps.

Edina residents who ranked the City’s quality of snow removal as “excellent” or “good” in 2019 Quality of Life survey

87%

Inches of snow before being considered “plowable” by Edina

1.5

Drivers in 4x4 trucks that plow the downtown parking ramps and alleys

3

Crew members using trackless sidewalk machines to clear City-owned sidewalks

5

Drivers for street snowplow routes

25

– COMPILED BY DEBBIE TOWNSEND
TIF Money to Be Used for Public Improvements in Grandview District
Roundabout, Street and Ramp Improvements Planned for Area

BY JENNIFER BENNEROTTE

The City is working to build a roundabout at Eden and Arcadia avenues, in addition to several other public improvements in the Grandview District.

At its meeting Dec. 17, the Housing & Redevelopment Authority (HRA) approved engineering services with SEH, Barr Engineering and Kimley-Horn to finalize plans for more than $5 million in potential improvements funded by the Grandview 2 Tax-Increment Financing District. The funds must be committed by June 2021.

The project would include reconstruction of Eden Avenue from Grandview Square to the Minnesota Highway 100 on-ramp and construction of new concrete sidewalks on the north side and a shared-use path on the south side of the street. Improvements to the sanitary sewer, water main and storm sewer systems are also planned, as well as the relocation of sanitary Lift Station 9.

To improve safety, City staff have also proposed closing the southbound on-ramp to Highway 100. The idea of closing the on-ramp will be tested in the spring before construction designs are finalized.

Street improvements would also be completed along Brookside Avenue from Eden to the Grandview parking ramp. New lighting and security cameras would be installed in the parking ramp in addition to wayfinding signage. Some structural improvements to the ramp would also be made.

“These projects meet many of the seven guiding principles for the Grandview District, including enhancing the District’s economic viability, designing for the present and future, organizing parking, improving movement within and access to the District, preserving future transit opportunities and creating an identity and unique sense of place,” said Engineering Director Chad Millner.

SEH, Barr Engineering and Kimley-Horn will manage construction of the improvements to be built later this year.

In other business last month, the HRA:

- Accepted the Housing Strategy Task Force’s report. The report includes the preservation of R1 zoning for single-family houses and recognizes the need for more multi-family housing to accommodate growth. The document is meant to guide housing priorities, suggest strategies and encourage the City to proactively facilitate quality housing developments.
- Agreed to negotiate with the Frauenshuh/United Property team for a redevelopment of 5146 Eden Ave.

The HRA next meets virtually 7:30 a.m. Thursdays Jan. 14 and 28.

The City is working to build a roundabout at Eden and Arcadia avenues in the Grandview District.
Task Force Recommends Alternatives for Future Street Funding
Resident Asked to Weigh in Before Jan. 19

BY JENNIFER BENNEROTTE

A task force is asking residents to weigh in on future costs of street reconstruction in Edina. The City’s Utility Fund covers the cost of curb and gutter and other utility improvements in a neighborhood roadway reconstruction project. Residents are currently assessed the cost of street reconstruction. Recent estimates for special assessments in neighborhoods with larger lots have climbed to more than $30,000, a figure City Council members aren’t comfortable with. The City Council delayed a project in the Prospect Knolls Neighborhood late last year until after a task force appointed by the City Manager could study the funding issue and make recommendations.

Before the City Council takes action on the recommendations, which have tax impacts, the task force urges residents to review and comment on the proposals. Comments are being collected at BetterTogetherEdina.org through Tuesday, Jan. 19.

The City Manager’s Street Funding Task Force, which has now been meeting for eight months, worked to find sustainable solutions viewed as equitable while maintaining roadways to the current standard. The group believes a change is necessary and has recommended two options:

- **Option 1:** Half of the street reconstruction paid for by special assessments and the other half paid with municipal taxes
- **Option 2:** All of the street reconstruction paid for with municipal taxes

If the City Council approves a change, the task force recommends the preferred option be phased in over a period of 16 years. The task force also recommends that the cost of any “subcuts” be removed from special assessments in Year 1 of the transition period to make the special assessments more equitable.

“It is very important that many residents look at the two proposed choices the task force has brought forward,” said Ann Swenson, chair of the Street Funding Task Force. “This resident input will be used this winter by the Council to potentially change how we pay for reconstruction of the next half of our streets. It is better to participate in the beginning than complain when it is too late.”

Learn more about the recommendations of the City Manager’s Street Funding Task Force and make comments at BetterTogetherEdina.org.

**What’s a Subcut?**
Currently, special assessments for street reconstruction in Edina can vary by up to 28 percent because of the soils underneath the existing street.

Most local streets are built with 4 inches of bituminous or asphalt pavement and 8 inches of gravel. The soils needed to support those 12 inches vary greatly by location. The material underneath the 12 inches is called “subbase” and when it needs to be removed, it is called “subcut.”

When the material has a lot of sand or gravel, little or no subcut is required. When the material is wet or includes a lot of clay or organics, a large subcut can be required.

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**Groups are currently meeting electronically. No experience is necessary. Most appointments are three years and begin March 1.**

Info: Community Engagement Coordinator MJ Lamon, 952-826-0360 or MLamon@EdinaMN.gov

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**Join an Advisory Board or Commission**
- Arts & Culture
- Board of Appeals & Equalization
- Community Health
- Energy & Environment
- Human Rights & Relations
- Parks & Recreation
- Planning
- Transportation

Learn more about the recommendations of the City Manager’s Street Funding Task Force and make comments at BetterTogetherEdina.org.