

**CITY OF LANSING**  
**CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**  
**March 2, 2023**

**Call To Order:**

The special meeting of the Lansing City Council was called to order by Mayor McNeill at 6:00 p.m.

**Roll Call:**

Mayor McNeill called the roll and indicated which Councilmembers were in attendance.

**Councilmembers Present:**

**Ward 1:** Gene Kirby

**Ward 2:** Don Studnicka

**Ward 3:** Kerry Brungardt and Jesse Garvey

**Ward 4:** Dan Clemons and Gregg Buehler

**Absent:** Marcus Majure

**COUNCIL CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA ITEMS:**

**Ward 1 Councilmember Interview**

Ward 1 Councilmember Dave Trinkle stepped down from his position on February 2, 2023. Staff advertised the open position as directed by Council. As of February 24, 2023, there are two applications submitted. The applicants are Kevin Gardner and Rebecca Gordon.

Mayor McNeill went over the procedures. He thanked Mr. Gardner and Ms. Gordon for applying. They will be filling an appointment for an unexpired term. If they get the position, they would run for the next election.

Councilmember Garvey asked if it was three years. The mayor answered yes.

Mr. McNeill stated that the way it will be run is the council will ask both applicants the same set of questions. We will do this individually out of fairness. We decided to go in order of application of receipt. Mr. Gardner will be first. We will ask Ms. Gordon to wait in the lobby when we ask the questions. After you both have been interviewed, we'll have you both stay in the lobby while the council deliberates. Then we will call you back in. Then we will hear motions on appointments. Once a motion has been made and seconded, we will take a vote. Then appoint one of you. Mayor McNeill asked Ms. Gordon to wait in the lobby and indicated for Mr. Gardner to approach the podium. Mr. McNeill then stated that Greg Buehler would start the questions.

**Councilmember Buehler:** Ok, Kevin. If you could see the council accomplish one thing over the next three years, what would it be?

**Mr. Gardner:** To keep progressing. Keep the town moving forward and not run into a stalemate or animosity like you see in the climate now-a-days where it is one side against the other. I would like to see the council accomplish, keep the town progressing.

**Councilmember Garvey:** If you're appointed, you'll serve Ward 1 but you also serve the whole city of Lansing. So, say something was happening in Ward 1 that was of benefit for the whole city, but some residents in Ward 1 were opposed to it. How would you handle that situation?

**Mr. Gardner:** As Ward 1 representative, I would go with the wishes of Ward 1 citizens. If ten of them came up, and they said they wanted to see it this way, and one person wanted to see it another way, I would have to go with the ten. Unless I knew better. I would say I would have to go with what their perception is, or what they wanted me to do. As their representative, I think I would have to go with the majority of their wishes.

**Councilmember Kirby:** Going back over the last few years, anything you think we got wrong or should have done different?

**Mr. Gardner:** No. With the council? No. I've watched a lot of the meetings and, having been part of it before, no. I haven't seen anything that I saw was wrong. No.

**\*\*6:04 Councilmember Marcus Majure entered council chambers. \*\***

**Councilmember Studnicka:** Kevin, would you be open to, if you were on the council, any special committees whenever, for study on wastewater or stormwater or major infrastructure changes and that. Would you be willing to have the time and be willing to serve on those sub-committees?

**Mr. Gardner:** Yes, yes, I would. I think it would be important to be part of stuff like that.

**Councilmember Brungardt:** Kevin, what are some obstacles that you think, that you believe our city is facing right now?

**Mr. Gardner:** The only obstacles I think the city are facing is what the United States is facing. The animosity. Everybody thinks their..., everybody has an opinion. Everybody has a viewpoint. But at this point, there's a lot of people far right and far left. Too far right, too far left that they can't see that the other people have the same view or opinion themselves. Animosity would be the biggest issue.

**Councilmember Clemons:** How would you interface and get the opinions of the citizens in Ward 1?

**Mr. Gardner:** I would look to Mr. Kirby first. He's more knowledgeable on what's going on in Ward 1, and then find out from him exactly what I need to do to be a good representative of that Ward.

**Mayor McNeill:** Marcus, did you have a question?

**Councilmember Majure:** Sorry I'm late, Mayor. You probably already asked the question that I had. So, drive on.

**Mayor McNeill:** Okay, Kevin. I appreciate your time. If there are no more questions, we'll have Ms. Gordon come in. Kevin, you can wait in the lobby.

Rebecca Gordon entered the chambers. Mayor McNeill stated they would go around the horn and start with Councilman Buehler.

**Councilmember Buehler:** Good evening, Ms. Gordon. Thanks for coming. If there is one thing you would like the council to accomplish during this appointment, what would it be?

**Ms. Gordon:** I think the biggest thing that's always on my mind is fiscal responsibility. So that families like mine can stay, afford to live in Lansing a long time. That's always something that is on our mind constantly. The rise of the cost of everything is always a struggle for families that are kind of in the middle. That's what I always see off the top of everything is can we afford this? Can my family afford this?

**Councilmember Garvey:** If appointed to this position, you would represent Ward 1, but you would also represent the entire city of Lansing. So, if something was proposed to happen in Ward 1 that maybe some residents were opposed to but maybe was of benefit to the city, how would you react in that situation?

**Ms. Gordon:** I think I'd have to weigh it again with the longevity of is this a good plan over a long period of time and for more people over the period of time.

**Councilmember Kirby:** First of all, I have to ask you a personal question. I'm from Kansas City, Kansas. Were you born and raised there or just lived there?

**Ms. Gordon:** Yes, I've lived there almost my entire life until we moved here about five years ago. Other than about a year in Missouri and a year in Johnson County.

**Councilmember Kirby:** Thinking back over the last three or four years, any decisions that we've made here at the council that you think were wrong?

**Ms. Gordon:** I guess I'd say that's hard to answer because I don't know all the decisions you guys have made. I haven't been the most invested. I have six children, and my youngest one's four. So, from the time we moved here until last year, I was really just completely enveloped in that. And so, up until not very long ago, I didn't know a lot. I don't know if that's fair. Not knowing the other side of it, like, you guys and a lot of people know, it's easy for everybody to criticize your decisions when maybe they don't know the whole conversation. They don't know everything that's coming into it. And being on the outside, it's really easy to judge and say, "Well, yeah, I disagree with everything you've done." Not saying I do, but I don't know if it's a completely fair assessment if I didn't do the research behind every decision.

**Councilmember Studnicka:** Would you be open to and have the time to serve on any subcommittees that may come up with this council maybe to study any infrastructure problems, wastewater problems, storm water problems. You know, all that kind of stuff. I noticed on your application that you homeschool your children. Will you have time or could make time to serve on these kind of things?

**Ms. Gordon:** Yeah, it actually... It sounds really time consuming, but we do have six children. Four of them are teenagers, and one of them has graduated already. And they kinda do a lot of their work. So, I do have a lot of very flexible time. Especially if it's things like evenings when my husband's home with the kids and things like that. That's when I'm the most flexible. And so, I do actually have quite a bit of time on my hands. And I'm interested in learning those things because I know things like the infrastructure. All the road stuff going in along Eisenhower at the intersection, I was very interested in what's really going on here and stuff like that. I'm interested to kind of be on the other side and learn a little bit more about the decisions and projects that are going on in the city.

**Councilmember Brungardt:** What do you believe are some obstacles that are facing our city? You can make that one obstacle or several.

**Ms. Gordon:** I don't know. Again, I just go back to me, just like our family and other families that I talk to who are similar. A lot of it is just the cost of living in Lansing. When taxes get raised that's always for us, well, we have to say, "Can we still afford to live here?" You know, are we going to have to move out? We love amenities, of course, but if it means we can no longer live in a city that we had planned to raise our kids. That to me is always first and foremost always the biggest obstacle. How do you make something desirable but affordable? And are there ways to bring in finances without putting the burden on families?

**Councilmember Clemons:** You're representing Ward 1. How do you intend to get the opinions and input from those citizens?

**Ms. Gordon:** Outside of just angry people who email you? I know some people canvas their neighborhoods and get to know their neighbors. I know most of the neighbors in our little neighborhood. We live on a dead-end cul-de-sac, and we're always out in the yard and in the street. So, all of our neighbors know us because we are just outside constantly. But outside of just our own street, I would assume just canvassing and being at community events and just being out there for people, so I feel reachable. Approachable.

Mayor McNeill stated that Ms. Gordon could wait in the lobby while the council deliberates. The Mayor, City Administrator, and City Clerk discussed that this was an open meeting.

### **Appointment to unexpired Ward 1 Term**

**Councilmember Brungardt made a motion to appoint Kevin Gardner to fill the unexpired term of Ward 1 Councilmember ending January 2026. Councilmember Studnicka seconded the motion.**

**Councilmember Majure:** Can we discuss the strengths besides having already served. Were there strengths that were clearly overcoming over someone who hasn't served but wants to serve. Is that a fair question?

**Councilmember Brungardt:** That was probably the mitigating factor that there's his involvement in the city, references from the city, that probably swayed. I think they're two great candidates, but I do believe... (inaudible).

**Councilmember Garvey:** Even if he hadn't served on the council before, the twenty-five years serving on Park and Rec Board and the fifteen years on the Tree Board are substantial investment into the city. I just look for that.

**Councilmember Brungardt:** I encourage Ms. Gordon to get involved in those ways. It might be something... (inaudible). Certainly, running for council position when it comes open. But I think those things matter. How much you're involved in the city.

**Mayor McNeill:** One way to go about discussions would be whoever asked the question talk about the strengths and weaknesses of the answer of the two candidates. To me, that should be what we're basing them on. We interviewed them both the same on the questions, not on their previous experience. In my view, we ought to base how their strengths and weaknesses were on the questions.

**Councilmember Buehler:** On mine, they both had good answers. Keep the city progressing and the fiscal responsibility. That one really rang with me. Because while we work very hard to maintain our fiscal responsibility, and I think we do a pretty good job, I think she made it very clear that there are people in this city with the inflation and all of the other things that are going on that that's something we need to continue to strive for. Because if we start raising our taxes and all of the other prices of everything else continue to go up like they've done since the pandemic basically, prices go up and up and up, there will be people that will not be able to afford to live here. So, on my question, I give her the green check.

**Councilmember Garvey:** With my question, I think it was a wash. I think they both answered the same way pretty much. They answered that they would listen to their constituents, the people living in their Ward. The question I asked is a tough question because I always think about that too. When you think about your Ward and what's best for your Ward but is it maybe not as good for your Ward but better for the whole city. That's a tough question to ask. But with that being said, I think that they both gave a good answer saying they would listen to people who had a discussion about what was going on and hear their voices. It's split down the middle on that one question for me. Mr. Gardner still gets the tie breaker because of his service.

**Councilmember Kirby:** I did notice that Kevin watches videos and meetings and has a really good idea of what's going on day to day. I was appreciative of the fact that he is paying somewhat attention.

**Councilmember Studnicka:** I think we're... (inaudible).



**Councilmember Brungardt:** Mayor, I thought they both gave a good answer to my question.

**Councilmember Clemons:** On mine, because we do represent the citizens, asking them how they would get the opinions of citizens Kevin said he would talk to Gene. He didn't say anything about the people in the Ward. When I asked her, she said she would canvas, and she's always outside. That's important to me that we represent people, and we remember that. So, I give her the green mark.

**Mayor McNeill:** I just wanted to get everybody thinking what the others are thinking. We do have a motion and a second. We can go ahead and call the roll on the first motion.

**Roll Call Vote:** Aye: Councilmembers Garvey, Brungardt, Studnicka, and Kirby. Nay: Councilmembers Majure, Buehler, and Clemons; Abstain: none; Absent: none. The motion was approved.

**Mayor McNeill:** Again, I'd like to thank you both for coming and interviewing. I thought you both gave great answers. We did have a motion and a second to approve Kevin Gardner for the term. So, Kevin Gardner will be the one appointed and sworn in. I don't know if you've heard of the Citizen Academy, Ms. Gordon? That's another good way to get involved. It would be beneficial if you're still considering it for that next election.

**Councilmember Garvey:** Before serving here, I was on the Board of Zoning Appeals. So, anywhere in the city where you can get your foot in the door.

**Councilmember Kirby:** I applied for a seat on the Fire District and didn't get it but was encouraged by the people to speak up. And then I did get on the Board of Zoning Appeals. Citizen's Academy is a great way for you to really get more in depth. When I became a council member, all the tours we got of the different departments was eye-opening. You get that in the Citizen's Academy too.

**Oath of Office:** City Clerk Tish Sims issued the Oath of Office to Councilmember Kevin Gardner

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Councilmember Kirby made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Buehler seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote:** Aye: Councilmembers Majure, Garvey, Buehler, Clemons, Brungardt, Studnicka, and Kirby. Nay: none; Abstain: none; Absent: none. The motion was approved.

The meeting adjourned at 6:26 p.m.

**ATTEST:**

  
City Clerk Tish Sims, CMC