

## CITY COUNCIL PREVIEW #2: DECEMBER 9, 2024

### No tax abatements (again) this week!

Because this week's agenda is light on agenda items that are worth commenting about, this City Council preview will take a retrospective look at City Council activity and actions in 2024. This will be the first of several looks back at this year's city council, each focusing on one broad area of achievement.

Elected on a platform of accountability, transparency, and good government, this Council made clear from the get-go that business-as-usual was not on the menu. The election of Robert Cotton to serve as the first Black City Council president in Valparaiso was a huge statement that times were changing, and that City Council would act as an independent entity. Further independence was established by appointing committed community servants to important committees, like the RDC, which includes three members appointed by the Mayor and two by City Council. These committees have in the past operated as unchecked wings of the Mayor's office; now there is some oversight over the RDC and other committee's activities.

To better have control over the matters which it considers, the Council passed its first resolution: to repeal an older resolution which suppressed Council members' ability to put items on Council's agenda. This gave Council some independent control of the agenda that it had previously lacked, wresting it from the Mayor's grasp.

Once Council had established that it was an independent body of government determined to execute its role as a check and balance on the Mayor's executive branch, it acted precisely that way when it prevented the Mayor's office from grabbing and spending discretionary funds on paving projects that already had dedicated funding. City Council also appropriated part of the discretionary funds to pay for independent counsel, reducing its reliance on the City attorney, who is appointed by the Mayor and is a member of the executive branch.

Valparaiso's Good Old Boys were unaccustomed to a City Council that refused to be a rubber stamp for their whims, and we saw significant backlash against this independence manifest itself in a variety of ways. Despite the backlash the City Council Democrats held firm, and further delivered on their campaign promises. In our next edition we'll talk a little about steps that City Council took to making Valparaiso more inclusive and diverse.

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