

Memorandum



From: Mayor Kim Norton

Re: Mayor's Commentary Attached to the Veto of a Motion by the Council to Use Contingency Funds for a City Supported Open Gym Pilot Program.

May 21, 2023

For our City to function optimally, I believe the City Council should focus on policy and a strong budget. It is the role of our staff to provide the data, research, and information necessary for the Council to make sound budgetary and policy decisions. It is my belief that if a Council Initiated Action (CIA) must be used, they are best used to direct staff to collect the data, do the research, and bring that information and recommendations back to the City Council for a study session and/or the potential for an informed vote. Spending contingency funds should be reserved for emergencies and city priorities - weighing carefully competing needs and expenditures.

The veto of this CIA was done after considerable thought and I hope is understood not as a judgement about the intent - which I believe is to offer more opportunities for young people in our community which is a value I share - but rather a concern about the use of a CIA for a direct expenditure in a vacuum. Without more discussion about prioritization of community needs, without a more robust community engagement process, without inclusion of youth serving partners, and without weighing priorities as we make budget decisions we can lose our focus and credibility with the community.

This veto will provide the additional time needed to work with community partners to determine need and evaluate space in the community that might be available with less cost and more partnership support. The Parks & Recreation Department should be queried as to whether they are able to provide Recreation Center hours/coverage - that gym appears to be open during the hours suggested in the CIA, but for a different usage, and they had not been approached about making some adjustments to provide space in north Rochester.

This veto will also allow more time for discussion on specific issues that I will share in a subsequent email. It's possible that taking this extra time will alleviate the need for City contingency fund usage, while still meeting the desired goals.