

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
COMMON COUNCIL
July 27, 2020**

The Common Council of the City of Rensselaer met on July 27, 2020 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 124 S. Van Rensselaer Street, Rensselaer, Indiana. Mayor Stephen Wood called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. followed by invocation offered by Council Member Russell Overton and Rev. Lisa Ulrich with the Nazarene Church and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Answering roll call were: Mayor Stephen Wood; Clerk-Treasurer Frieda Bretzinger; Council Members Russ Overton, Bill Hollerman, Noelle Weishaar, George Cover, Ernest Watson, Jr; City Attorney Jacob Ahler; Cemetery Supt. Kevin Cochran; Park Supt. Joe Effinger; Building Commissioner and Fire Chief Kenny Haun; Police Chief Matt Anderson; Street Supt. Andy Daniels; Project Coordinator Jerry Lockridge; Gas Supt. Carol Lockridge. Utility Office Manager Heather Smart; Electric Lead Line Foreman Lenny Larson, Electric Plant Supt. Claude Grow; Harley Tomlinson with the Rensselaer Republican.

Also in attendance were Robert Schenk with Rensselaer Adventures, Joe Gembala with the Eagles, John Julien with Baker Tilly, Stace Pickering with C/I Insurance, Andrew Rubarge with Commonwealth Engineers.

The minutes of the July 13, 2020 council meeting were presented. There was a motion by Hollerman and second by Overton to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Citizen Comments and Petitions: The Eagles asked permission to close Harrison Street on September 12th for the Eagles Fish Fry if Little Cousin Jasper is held. There was a motion by Watson, second by Cover, to close Harrison Street if LCJ is not cancelled. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Hearing for Additional Appropriation Ordinance 09-2020: There was a motion by Overton, second by Hollerman, to close the regular meeting and open the public hearing. The motion passed unanimously. Bretzinger announced that this public hearing was publishing in the Rensselaer Republican on July 11th and pertains to additional appropriations in the General Fund of \$14,157.00 and the LOIT Special Distribution Fund of \$70,332.00. There being no comments, there was a motion by Cover, second by Watson, to close the public hearing and open the regular council meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance 09-2020, Additional Appropriation: Bretzinger said this ordinance is an additional appropriation in the General Fund of \$14,157.00 and the LOIT Special Distribution Fund of \$70,332.00. There was a motion by Cover, second by Watson, to approve the ordinance. The motion passed unanimously.

Ordinance 11-2020, Additional Appropriation: Bretzinger told council this ordinance is an additional appropriation for insurance proceeds for the park department regarding the damage of the pool motor. There was a motion by Overton, second by Hollerman, to approve the ordinance. The motion passed unanimously.

Sewer Rate Analysis: John Julien with Baker Tilly discussed the sewer rate analysis that his firm was asked to perform. The last time the sewer rates were changed was in 2014 which was tiered so the last increase was 2016. This study was done because of the Main Lift Station and Unsewered Areas project. Costs have also gone up, especially in labor costs and benefits. He said we need a 10% increase to get us going in the right direction. The main lift station project will require a relocation which will have an impact on the rates and charges. This will have a 10% impact on the rates and charges. He said this increase could be done in a couple of steps. We're looking at a 20% increase over a two to three year period. The recommendation would be for him to come to council next month with an ordinance for the rates. The timing would be the first increase January of 2021 and another increase in January of 2022. He said it's been a few years since the water rates have been looked at and it may be a good time to look at that utility as well. The water utility is in pretty good shape but it probably needs to be reviewed. A 12 to 15% increase may be needed for a new water tower project. Watson asked if the 20% sewage rate increase is partly because of the closure of St. Joseph's College. Julien said that is a contributing factor.

Sanitation Department Trash Collection Rate Analysis: Julien's firm was also asked to study the sanitation service's performance. Julien said the sanitation is a sub-fund or department of General Fund. Any shortfall is covered by tax dollars. His position is to move the Sanitation Department to a fund by itself and support it by user fees. We are generating about \$500,000 in revenue and spending about \$700,000.00. We would also need a capital program to cover trucks. Right now we have a sticker program and fixed fee program for commercial customers. \$17.85 would be about the flat monthly fee projected for a residence. About 15% of the customers are commercial. Their recommendation is to move away from the sticker program and go to a flat rate and to go to a stand-alone fund. This would also go into effect January 1. This is something that needs to be decided on soon because you are in the middle of a budget. It should be noted in the minutes tonight how the council wants to handle the sanitation department. There was a motion by Cover, second by Overton, to prepare the 2021 budget without the sanitation budget in General Fund. The motion passed unanimously. Watson asked if we are thinking about some of our older citizens. Julien said at this point, there's limits to what you can do. In the initial onset of this some of the cost will cover capital projects. But he said in a couple of years we could go to the smaller totes for seniors and give a discount. Lockridge said the trucks could be purchased in 2022 with the totes being purchased in 2023 and then distributed in 2024. The first meeting in August would introduce the rate ordinances and the second meeting would be the public hearing.

Main Lift Station Sewer Project: Andrew Rubarge, the Commonwealth engineer for the project, said the main lift station will be relocated so that it is out of the floodway. He felt this will be a better operational project and he was in favor of the project.

IMPA Contract Extension: Ahler said he met with their attorney. He doesn't have a problem with the contract. It's merely an extension of what we have in place. Wood said this will be addressed at the next meeting.

Squad Car Purchase Request: Anderson said he talked to Dodge and they took the line down. He's not asking permission to buy the vehicles, just to tell them what he wants. There was a motion by Watson, second by Overton, to allow him to talk to them. The motion passed unanimously.

Forty Year Awards Discussion: Jerry Lockridge said the committee met. He said currently the city recognizes employees up to thirty years and would like to add a forty-year award. The committee is recommending a jacket with the City of Rensselaer emblem on it that will say 40 years of service and a \$400.00 bonus. They are also asking for this to be retroactive. There was a motion by Cover, second by Hollerman, to approve the recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

Credit Card Activity Log: Wood asked permission to sign the Credit Card Activity Log. There was a motion by Overton, second by Watson, to approve the mayor to sign the log. The motion passed unanimously.

Administrative Comments:

Weishaar had nothing. Hollerman said he has some constituents that would like to see golf cart use. Cover asked Anderson about golf carts in town and he has some concerns. He said the county has had some complaints in Wheatfield. Wood appointed a committee of Hollerman, Anderson, Ahler, Haun, Lockridge and Larson. Ahler said he just wrote ordinances for Brook and Wolcott. Overton had nothing. Wood had nothing. Bretzinger had nothing. Watson said things have been negative with the virus and everything. We have some holidays coming up he would like to see something positive. Maybe we could have a holiday light contest. The park is coming along and maybe we could do something with the bathroom shell and the pool colors. Cover asked Lockridge if he talked to the railroad. Lockridge said he talked to the gentleman and they are looking into it.

Claims Approval: The claims were presented to council for its approval. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Watson, to approve the claims. The motion passed unanimously.

Superintendents Reports:

Building Department: Haun had nothing.

Cemetery Department: Cochran said to emphasize that Watson said he would like to see Christmas lights downtown.

Electric Department: Larson had nothing. Grow had nothing.

Fire Department: Haun had nothing.

Gas Department: Carol Lockridge had nothing.

Legal Department: Ahler had nothing.

Park Department: Effinger said the park board and corporation will meet next Monday night at 6:00 p.m. at Iroquois Park.


Police Department: Anderson asked about the Covid-19 testing and Wood said they open at 7:30 a.m. but they don't start testing until 9:00 a.m. and close at 6:00 p.m.

Street, Sanitation, Sewage and Water Departments: Daniels said he has three glass crushers with two down and one is on its last leg. He contacted the Six County Solid Waste District about using grant money for a new one. Lockridge had nothing.

Utility Office: Smart said they are cancelling the city picnic. She said maybe the \$1,500.00 designated for the picnic could be used for something around Christmas like a pizza party. Smart asked that the picnic committee also plan the holiday party. There was a motion by Watson, second by Cover, to plan something around the holidays. The motion passed unanimously.

Pickering said he met with Bretzinger and Wood to go over the insurance renewal for the upcoming year. There was a packet to go out to council. Wood said he will get that to council.

There being nothing more to come before council, there was a motion by Overton, second by Cover, to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.


Stephen A. Wood, Mayor

Attest:


Frieda Bretzinger, IAMC
Clerk-Treasurer