

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
COMMON COUNCIL
August 23, 2021**

The Common Council of the City of Rensselaer met on August 23, 2021 in Council Chambers of City Hall. Mayor Stephen Wood called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. followed by invocation offered by Council Member Russ Overton 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; City Attorney Jacob Ahler; Building Commissioner Kevin Cochran; Park Supt. Joe Effinger; Cemetery Supt. Tony Baltes; Police Chief Matt Anderson; Utility Office Manager Heather Smart; Project Coordinator Jerry Lockridge; Gas Supt. Carol Lockridge; Electric Lead Line Foreman Lenny Larson; Harley Tomlinson with the Rensselaer Republican. Council Member Ernest Watson, Jr; Fire Chief Kenny Haun and Street Supt. Andy Daniels were not in attendance.

Also in attendance were: Robert Schenk with Rensselaer Adventures; Stace Pickering with C/I.

The minutes of the August 9, 2021 regular council meeting were presented. There was a motion by Overton and second by Hollerman to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Citizen Comments and Petitions: Wood asked if there were any citizens that had comments.

Jared Valentine Walk: Heather Smart said the family of Valentine is planning a 5K for a scholarship. The route is the same. It will be held September 25th. There was a motion by Overton, second by Hollerman, to approve the request. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Oktoberfest: Pickering said it's the same program as in the past. It will be September 25th and the committee is requesting the block of Van Rensselaer Street in front of city hall be closed from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 p.m. There was a motion by Cover, second by Hollerman, to approve the closure. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Eagles Fish Fry: No one was present to explain the request. Lockridge thought it was Saturday, September 11th. Wood asked for a motion to close Harrison Street from the alley to Front Street. There was a motion by Overton, second by Hollerman, to approve the closure. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Resolution 16-2021, Transfer of Funds: Bretzinger said this resolution is to transfer \$8,850.00 within the Weston Cemetery budget and \$6,500.00 within the Park Department budget. There was a motion by Hollerman, second by Cover, to approve the resolution as presented. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Backhoe Replacement: Lockridge presented two quotes for backhoes. West Side Tractor sales quoted a 2021 John Deere 310SL Backhoe Loader for \$108,804.19 with a trade-in and discount of a 2012 John Deere 310SL for \$24,731.96 making the price \$84,072.23. MacAllister CAT quoted a new Caterpillar Model 420 Backhoe Loader at \$112,460.00 and trade-in of the 2012 John Deere of \$24,000.00 making the purchase price \$88,460.00. Lockridge recommended purchasing the 2021 John Deere from West Side Tractor Sales. There was a motion by Cover, second by Overton, to approve the purchase from West Side. He said we would pay for it from Water Depreciation. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Hedging Agreement Between Utility Gas Management and City of Rensselaer: Lockridge said this agreement is in connection with prepaid gas supplies purchased from PEFA. It is the same agreement but since we are now in the discount program it requires council approval instead of just allowing the mayor to sign. There was a motion by Overton, second by Hollerman, to enter into the agreement. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Affirm Plan Commission Decision Rezone: Cochran said the Plan Commission heard a zoning change from Roger Mathew. The property is zoned agricultural presently and REMC is interested in purchasing the property. They would like to have it zoned light industrial. The Plan Commission approved the request but it also requires council approval. This is contingent on the sale of property and getting the tenants out. There was a motion by Cover, second by Weishaar, to approve the rezone contingent on the sale of the property and getting the tenants out. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Credit Card Activity Log: Wood asked permission to sign the credit card activity log. There was a motion by Hollerman, second by Overton, to approve the activity log. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Public Relations Request: Wood said he has a request from Main Street for Oktoberfest. They are asking for \$200.00 out of Public Relations Fund. There was a motion by Hollerman, second by Weishaar, to approve the request. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Insurance Committee: Wood wants a committee to look at health insurance. He wants family coverage to be more affordable. Cover, Hollerman, Larson, Lockridge and Bretzinger are appointed to the committee. There was a motion by Overton, second by Cover, to approve the committee. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

2022 Budget: The public hearing for the budget is on September 13th. Wood would like a budget workshop between September 13th and September 27th, which is adoption of the budget.

Administrative Comments:

Weishaar attended a virtual budget meeting put on by AIM. She found it helpful. Code Enforcement was also included in the meeting.

Hollerman thanked Smart for her work on the picnic.

Overton had nothing.

Wood also thanked Smart for her work on the picnic.

Bretzinger had nothing.

Watson was absent.

Cover said he talked to Larson about losing two linemen. He feels wages need to be more competitive. Cover said this is a highly skilled job and probably the most dangerous in the city. He proposed that we raise salaries from \$39.09 to \$43.50 to hold linemen here. He said it would take an amendment to the salary schedule which Ahler could draw up by the next meeting. He said Ahler told him it would have to be advertised. Ahler asked if the amount was going to be discussed in the committee and Wood said he was sure it would. Bretzinger asked Larson how he got the salary amount from Jasper County REMC. Larson said he contacted employees. Bretzinger said she called them and they said each employee was under a labor contract and it couldn't be discussed. Weishaar asked if pay is why they're leaving and he said it was pay and benefits. There was a motion by Cover, second by Hollerman, to amend the salary ordinance as presented by Ahler. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Claims Approval: The claims were presented to council for its approval. There was a motion by Overton, second by Cover, to approve the claims. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Superintendents Reports:

Building Dept: Cochran wants to raise some money for Christmas lights. He's asking council to ask people to donate to the Christmas Light Fund.

Cemetery Dept: Baltes had nothing.

Electric Dept: Larson said the concrete company showed up today. Mid next week all of the concrete will be poured.

Fire Dept: Haun had nothing.

Gas Dept: Lockridge said the new line is up and running as of last Wednesday. There still needs to be some tweaking and adjusting and some final things to be done at the station.

Law Dept: Ahler had nothing.

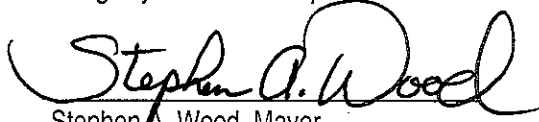
Park Dept: Effinger said they are working on the south bathrooms.

Police Dept: Anderson lost two officers and a crossing guard at St. Augustine School this month. He would like permission to open the hiring process. Wood told Anderson the police officers would normally be done through the Board of Works but he will allow council to approve that. There was a motion by Overton, second by Hollerman, to allow Anderson to start the hiring process for two police officers and a crossing guard. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Street, Sanitation, Water and Sewer: Daniels was absent. Lockridge said there was a problem with a water main by Pizza King. They are going to do a valve insertion. They are going to schedule a kick-off meeting next week for the water project. First Group is working up a contract for a 2021 street assessment. This is needed for the Community Crossing grant. Peerless-Midwest is testing Well #6 and it looks like it is coming back but we still need some bacteria tests on it.

Utility Office: Smart had nothing.

There being nothing more to come before council, there was a motion by Overton, second by Weishaar, to adjourn. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent and the meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.


Stephen A. Wood, Mayor

Attest:


Frieda Bretzinger, IAMC
Clerk-Treasurer