

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
COMMON COUNCIL
April 24, 2023**

The Common Council of the City of Rensselaer met on April 24, 2023 in regular session in Council Chambers of City Hall. Mayor Stephen Wood called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. followed by invocation offered by Elizabeth Hartman and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Answering roll call were: Mayor Stephen Wood; Clerk-Treasurer Shelby Keys; Council Members Bill Hollerman, Noelle Weishaar, George Cover, Ernest Watson, Jr; City Attorney Jacob Ahler; Building Commissioner Josh Davis; Park Supt. Joe Effinger; Fire Chief Kenny Haun; Police Chief Matt Anderson; Utility Office Manager Heather Smart; Electric Lead Line Foreman Lenny Larson; Asst. Street Supt. Bryce Black; Project Coordinator Jerry Lockridge; Harley Tomlinson with the Rensselaer Republican. Council Member Russ Overton, Cemetery Caretaker Tony Baltes and Gas Supt. Carol Lockridge were absent.

Also in attendance were Robert Schenk with Rensselaer Adventures, Zyan Miller with JCEDO, Ben Worrell, Mike Manis, Andrew Robarge and Gabrielle Taber with Commonwealth Engineers, Jim Hall with White Castle, Kevin Arnold, Connor Schultz, Dewayne Shultz, Shane Whaley, Joel Roper, Jeff Hesson, Victoria Ross-Frost with IMPA, Caleb DeJong and Juanita Saucedo.

The minutes of the April 10, 2023 regular council meeting were presented. There was a motion by Hollerman, second by Cover, to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Citizen Comments and Petitions: Jeff Hesson, representing the Fraternal Order of Eagles, stated they had three upcoming events. May 6th there will be a benefit and are requesting to barricade the City Hall parking lot from 9 am – 1 pm for a cornhole tournament. June 17th they will be having EagleFest and are requesting to close the street from Front Street to the City Hall parking lot from 8 am – 6 pm and have a beer garden. September 9th they will be having a fish fry and would like to close Front to Van Rensselaer from 8 am – 8:30 pm. They will also need barricades, a dumpster, and electric. Anderson said he had no issues with the beer garden, they will need to get a permit. There was a motion by Cover, second by Watson, to approve the requests from the Eagles. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Public Hearing for Wastewater Treatment Upgrades Preliminary Engineering Report (PER): There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Watson, to close the regular meeting and open the public hearing. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Andrew Robarge said this PER is an improvement project to the wastewater treatment plant. This public hearing is a requirement by Indiana SRF, the possible funding entity for this project. These improvements are the next phase of the long-term control plan. The facility is currently reaching the end of its useful life and experiences issues. Several alternatives were considered including no action, secondary process alternatives and improvements associated with secondary process. The recommendation from the PER is the sequencing batch reactor type secondary process, aerobic digester expansion, expansion of existing UV system, intermediate lift station, biological Phosphorous removal with chemical backup, and a replacement effluent sewer. Environmental impacts were discussed including soils, geology, hydrology, air quality, plants and animals, historic sites, natural landmarks and open space opportunities. The all-in estimated cost of these improvements is currently identified as \$14,469,500.00 Robarge explained that this is not commitment to proceeding with the project, just looking to see what money is available from the Indiana Finance Authority to make the upgrades. This public hearing is intended to show the project, cost, and the schedule. Public comment will be accepted for 5 days after this meeting. Comments can be submitted to city hall. Wood said the city has been under court order since 2007. Cover said the long-term control plan is not optional, it's a requirement. If we don't do it, there are significant fines.

There was a motion by Watson, second by Hollerman, to close the public hearing and open the regular council meeting. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Ordinance 06-2023, Saint Joseph's College Super Voluntary Annexation: Wood said the public hearing has already been held and the next step is to adopt the annexation ordinance. There was a motion by Cover, second by Weishaar, to adopt the ordinance. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Resolution 09-2023, Economic Development Rider: Roper said IMPA has an economic development rider. This is an incentive for new or existing industrial customers. Two basic requirements are \$1 million in investment and 1 Megawatt of additional demand. This is a 5-year program and is on a sliding scale. The first year is a 20% discount on the demand charge, second year is a 15% discount, third and fourth year is a 10% discount, and 5% discount in the fifth year. If they fail to meet in any month, then there is no discount. IMPA will reimburse the city on the wholesale rate. There was a motion by Watson, second by Cover, to approve the resolution. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Ordinance 10-2023, Economic Development Rider: Wood said a resolution also has to be passed. There was a motion by Watson, second by Weishaar, to adopt the ordinance. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Resolution 10-2023, Green Power Rider: Victoria Ross-Frost said the green power program is for residential or commercial customers to participate in. This program would have consumers opt-in to receive a portion of their energy consumed from a renewable source. Some companies have aggressive carbon neutral goals and this is a good option for companies who may not be ready to put solar panels on their roof, but are looking for somewhere to start. Roper said the same would apply to residential. They may not have the space for solar panels. The IMPA rate is .005¢ and the city adds .001¢ for administrative, totaling .006¢ per kWh. There was a motion by Cover, second by Hollerman, to approve the resolution. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Ordinance 11-2023, Green Power Rider: Wood said a resolution also has to be passed. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Watson, to adopt the ordinance. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Resolution 14-2023, Transfer of Funds: Keys read a transfer of funds within the Cemetery Department for \$18,000.00. Wood said this is to repave the cemetery roads. There was a motion by Watson, second by Cover, to approve the resolution. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Resolution 15-2023, White Castle System, Inc Expansion Project Tax Abatement Application: Miller introduced the White Castle System, Inc. expansion project and asked that it be considered for a 7-year tax abatement. It will be a \$35 million-dollar investment, creating 20 new jobs at \$21.00 an hour. A building near their current operations was bought and will be remodeled to expand operations. The abatement request is for personal and real property. Worrell, with Mcguire Sponsel, is a site selection location advisory firm for White Castle based out of Indianapolis. He said they are estimating \$20 million for renovating a building and \$23 million for equipment. This is for phase 1 and additional phases could be added in the future. Wood said White Castle has always been a good partner. Watson said he was hoping for more than 20 new jobs with that large of an investment. Worrell said a lot of the machinery and equipment is automated. Weishaar wanted to verify that they are meeting all the criteria to receive the abatement. Miller said yes. There was a motion by Cover, second by Hollerman, to approve the resolution. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Tax Abatement Compliance Forms: Miller said these are for tax abatements that the City already has. There are 11 active abatements comprised of ConAgra Foods, Indiana Municipal Power Agency and Rensselaer Solar 2 Array, FSSC LLC dba Indiana Facemask, Filtration Parts, Geyer's American Melt Blown Filtration. Gold Bond Building Products, and Richard N. Reese Family LLC. There are 4 real estate and 7 personal property abatements. The CF-1 forms have been submitted to JCEDO for all abatements. These current abatements resulted in 158 jobs created, 384 jobs retained and \$41 million invested in the City. Based on the filings, JCEDO is recommending to approve all active CF-1 forms. Wood said all the abatements are gradual. There was a motion by Cover, second by Hollerman, to approve the abatements. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Water & Wastewater Field Data Collection: Roper said the water/wastewater department has coordinated with the electric department to do a field data inventory. A firm will come in and inventory every asset of the department including poles, wires, meters. Each inventory will get a unique identifier. The inventory data will be imported in to the WTH system, which is what the city uses for mapping. This was bid in two parts, electric field data collection and water/wastewater field data collection. There was only one bidder for each, GMS. For the water/wastewater side this inventory would cover all water meters, manholes, storm inlets, water valves, water hydrants, water towers, and lift stations. The total estimated price is \$28,623.00, not to exceed \$32,000.00. Black said he has an IFA grant ready to be submitted for \$15,000.00, which would go towards the cost of this field data collection. There was a motion by Watson, second by Cover, to approve the recommendation of approving the bid from GMS. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Electric Field Data Collection: Roper said he is recommending the same firm, GMS, for the electric field data collection. The total estimated price is \$46,840.00, not to exceed \$49,000.00. There was a motion by Watson, second by Cover, to approve the recommendation of approving the bid from GMS. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Bid Opening for Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI): Roper said the city currently has drive-by meter reading system. The next step is an AMI system. This gives the utility the ability to see usage from each individual house, amongst other things. This will be utilized by the electric department. 3 bids were received. Roper proposed to open the bids and take them under advisement. The bids are as follows:

Wesco Supply - \$596,176.00
Indiana Municipal Power Agency Option 1 - \$554,831.00
Indiana Municipal Power Agency Option 2 - \$608,020.00
Holland Supply Sensus- \$1,223,056.44

Roper will review the bids and return next meeting with a recommendation.

Update Parks and Recreation Master Plan: Manis, President of the Rensselaer Community Recreational Development Corporation, said the last master plan was done in 2009. The plan needs updated and most grants require a current plan to receive funds. Cover said he has had constituents mention how happy they would be to have a splash pad. Wood spoke with KIRPC about possibly updating the plan. They gave him a price of \$7,000.00 - \$10,000.00. Conversations will be had in the future of what will be included in the plan. There was a motion by Cover, second by Watson, to allow KIRPC to upgrade the master plan. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Ratify Council Poll for Electric Department Truck Request: The electric department got approval at the January 23rd meeting to purchase a new truck from Gutwein Motors. Wood was informed that they do not make the particular model of the truck that was agreed on. Gutwein had a similar vehicle for an additional \$6,500.00 than what was approved. Wood polled the council on April 17th and received 4 ayes and 1 nay. There was a motion by Cover, second by Hollerman, to confirm the poll. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Burial Rights Request: Keys read a request for burial rights for Robert McDaniel. There was a motion by Hollerman, second by Watson, to approve the request. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

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

Administrative Comments:

Wood said he wanted to do an update to the salary ordinance. Cover said it has been called to his attention that the utility office manager's work load has increased due to grants and different projects. Cover made a recommendation to increase the office manager's salary by \$80/biweekly. There was a motion by Cover, second by Watson, to approve the increase. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent. Keys said this would not go into effect until an amendment to the salary ordinance is passed at the next meeting.

Wood said the gas utility open house is Friday, April 28th from 11:00-1:00. There will be an Arbor Day Proclamation at the Primary School on April 28th and 1:00 PM. The National Day of Prayer will be held at the Jasper County Community Services on May 4th.

Cover had nothing.

Watson had nothing.

Keys said there was an FMLA request. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Watson, to approve the request. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Overton was absent.

Hollerman had nothing.

Weishaar thanked Larson for the tour of the electric plant.

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

Superintendents Reports:

Police Dept: Anderson said the new squad car was picked up Friday and should be on the road sometime next week.

Law Dept: Ahler had nothing.

Utility Office: Smart said thanks for the support.

Building Dept: Davis had nothing.

Fire Dept: Haun said the city-wide yard sale is April 29th and the fire department fish fry is May 5th. He will be at the FDIC convention this week in Indianapolis.

Electric Dept: Larson said they have started rebuilding a line on Melville Street.

Street, Sanitation, Water and Sewage: Black said clean-up week starts May 1st and the section of West Harrison Street along the Court House will be closed from April 24th-April 28th. J. Lockridge said the new main lift station will be partially online this week. There is little work left to do on Washington Street for the unsewered areas and Clark Street will be completed next.

Cemetery Dept: Baltes was absent.

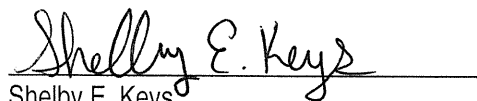
Gas Dept: C. Lockridge was absent.

Park Dept: Effinger said the Park Board and Corporation will meet next Monday at 6:00 pm.

There being nothing more to come before council, there was a motion by Weishaar, second by Hollerman, to adjourn. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent., and the meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.


Stephen A. Wood, Mayor

Attest:


Shelby E. Keys
Clerk-Treasurer