

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

CITY OF HOOPESTON

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2023

7:00 PM – CITY HALL

- I. CALL TO ORDER – Acting Clerk Hardcastle called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm following the pledge of allegiance.
- II. ROLL CALL – The following 7 alderman were present: Eyrich, K Ferrell, M. Ferrell, Highfill, Lawson, Porth, and Scharlach. Attorney Miller was also present. Mayor Wise was on Zoom. Clerk Lane and Alderman Garrett were absent, and Brad Hardcastle was filling in as clerk.
- III. MAYOR PRO TEMPORE – Acting Clerk Hardcastle opened the floor for nominations for a mayor pro tempore to lead the meeting in Mayor Wise's absence. Alderman Eyrich nominated Alderwoman Lawson to serve as mayor pro tempore. Alderwoman K. Ferrell seconded. Motion carried 7-0.
- IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Alderman M. Ferrell moved to approve the agenda as presented. Alderman Porth seconded. Motion carried 7-0.
- V. MINUTES FROM PRIOR COUNCIL MEETING – Alderwoman Highfill moved to approve the minutes from the previous council meeting. Alderman Eyrich seconded. Motion carried 7-0.
- VI. PAYMENT OF BILLS – Alderman M. Ferrell moved to approve the payment of the city's bills as presented. Alderman Porth seconded. A voice vote was taken (Ayes: Eyrich, K. Ferrell, M. Ferrell, Highfill, Lawson, Porth, Scharlach – Nays: None – Absent: Garrett) and payment of the bills was passed 7-0.
- VII. PRESENTATIONS – None
- VIII. PETITIONS TO THE COUNCIL – None
- IX. PUBLIC COMMENT
 - a. Ray Stump of the 900-blk of E. Main St. addressed the council regarding people riding bicycles in the downtown area and hitting parked cars, his included. Mr. Stump also commented on reckless drivers on Main St. and people running into the roadway in front of Anderson Funeral Home. Alderwoman Lawson advised Mr. Stump that she would let the police department know of his concerns.
- X. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

XI. REPORT OF OFFICERS:

a. EYRICH:

- i. ERH CONTRACT: Alderman Eyrich presented the new ERH contract for operation of the sewer plant. Alderman Eyrich advised the council that the version of the contract that was passed around had some deletions including ERH's responsibility for mowing, which would fall to the Parks Department and snow removal which would fall to the Street & Alley Department. This will be a 3-year contract, which is the maximum amount of time allowed by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. The cost of the new contract would increase by about 8.5% to \$21,000 per month. Alderman Eyrich moved to approve this new contract and authorize the mayor to sign the contract. Alderwoman K. Ferrell seconded. A voice vote was taken (Ayes: Eyrich, K. Ferrell, M. Ferrell, Highfill, Lawson, Porth, Scharlach – Nays: None – Absent: Garrett) and the new ERH contract was approved 7-0.
- ii. DUMP TRUCK REPAIR: The water department is still waiting for Jeffries' Heavy Machinery to repair the department dump truck. It has been out of service for the past 4 weeks.
- iii. VACATIONS: The water department has had several employees using vacation time at the end of the year to use up their balances.

b. K. Ferrell:

- i. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MEETING: Alderwoman K. Ferrell reported that she attended the Hoopeston Economic Development meeting today and passed around information regarding the Back to Business grants being pushed by Vermilion Advantage.
- ii. CHRISTMAS LIGHT DONATION: Reported that Paul Offutt donated money again this year to go towards new Christmas lights.
- iii. DOWNTOWN DEMOLITIONS: Reported that the downtown demolition project should be starting on December 27 with the asbestos remediation of 217 E. Main St.

c. M. Ferrell:

- i. CITY SLAB: Alderman M. Ferrell reminded residents that the city slab is for dumping of yard waste only. In the past few months someone has been dumping other items. If this illegal dumping continues, the slab will be closed. The Street

& Alley department is looking into getting cameras to monitor the slab.

- ii. GARBAGE REMEDIATION – 408 S. SECOND AVE: Alderman M. Ferrell stated that he would like the council to come up with an established procedure on how to allow citizens to cleanup properties around town. This includes properties that do not have water service, thus are not billed for garbage. He went on to state that this is meant to help the neighbors more than the actual property owners since trash would not be blown into the neighboring yards. The current cost for garbage pickup that is billed on city water bills is \$20. Can someone just come up and pay the \$20 fee and then garbage be picked up? Alderman Eyrich stated that he spoke with Marta Pierce, the water billing clerk, who said that a whole new ordinance would need to be created since water/sewer/garbage is all governed by one ordinance and you cannot pick one or two of the three things to bill for. Alderman Eyrich stated that his opinion is that if someone does not clean it up, it will not get done. Alderwoman Lawson stated that the problem is as someone is cleaning up this yard, the owner is bringing more stuff out into the yard. Alderman Eyrich advised that there are about 6 active cases in city court regarding this property owner. Alderman M. Ferrell said that there will be other properties that these kinds of issues will pop up and the city needs a procedure for this. A neighbor then stated that she had been mowing the lawn, but the mower was ruined due to the amount of junk in the yard. She has also found drugs, needles, and other items in her yard. She also commented about the rodents and other wildlife coming from that property onto hers. Alderwoman Lawson then said that the city needs to move forward with condemning the property. Alderwoman K. Ferrell added that we currently do not have a building inspector. The one that was appointed previously cannot start until March. Mayor Wise stated that we can move forward with condemnation since the structure does not have water service and the city ordinance states that a structure must have water service to be livable. Attorney Miller stated that was correct and he would start action on this property.

d. GARRETT:

- i. Absent.

e. HIGHFILL:

- i. Nothing to report.

f. LAWSON:

- i. ANIMAL CONTROL CONTRACT: Alderwoman Lawson tabled the HART contract to house animals. They currently do not have the space or funding to house any

more animals.

- ii. EMA VEHICLE BID: Announced the 2003 Ford E350 bid notice for EMA's vehicle. Bid specifications are at city hall and bids are due by December 29 at
- iii. CITIZEN OF THE YEAR – Announced that the Hoopeston Jaycees were accepting nominations for Citizen of the Year. Nominations may be made at www.hoopestonjaycees.org.

g. PORTH:

- i. CITYWIDE LIABILITY INSURANCE PROPOSAL: Alderman Porth reviewed again the liability insurance renewal summary. Renewal will have a 9.25% increase, mainly due to the increase in premiums for the city's buildings. Gallagher, the insurance broker, originally was thinking it was going to be a 15% increase, but they were able to get it to 9.25% instead. There is also a shortage of companies willing to write this kind of insurance. Alderman Porth made a motion to accept this proposal and authorize the mayor to sign the applicable documents. Alderman Eyrich seconded. A voice vote was taken (Ayes: Eyrich, K. Ferrell, M. Ferrell, Highfill, Lawson, Porth, Scharlach – Nays: Non – Absent: Garrett) and the insurance proposal was passed 7-0.
- ii. PAID LEAVE FOR ALL ORDINANCE: Alderman Porth presented the ordinance for council approval. This would give every employee 2 paid leave days per year. This leave would be above and beyond any other accrued leave that the employee has. IML recommended passing this ordinance, even though litigation is still ongoing with this act. Alderman Porth moved for approval. Alderman M. Ferrell seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken (Ayes: Eyrich, K. Ferrell, M. Ferrell, Highfill, Lawson, Porth, Scharlach – Nays: Non – Absent: Garrett) and Ordinance 2024-15 was passed 7-0.

h. SCHARLACH:

- i. Nothing to report.

XII. COMMUNICATIONS TO COUNCIL:

- a. Acting Clerk Hardcastle read a letter from resident, Ron Lewis. Mr. Lewis thanked the council for the work that they have done razing the various buildings around town.

XIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None

XIV. NEW BUSINESS: None

XV. COMMENTS BY THE MAYOR:

- a. BURNED OUT BUILDINGS: Attorney Miller stated that his assistant has been ill, but when he returns, he will be working on Hoopeston issues.
- b. SUDVISION OF VERMILION IRON PROPERTY: The Vermilion Iron property and the adjacent baseball fields are currently 1 parcel. Hoopeston Land Improvements is looking to subdivide the property and have the baseball fields be on its own parcel. Bill Nicholls, representing Hoopeston Land Improvements, passed around an engineer rendering of the proposed subdivided parcels. He stated that he went before the Planning and Zoning Commission, and they approved it. Attorney Miller stated that we would need something in writing to formally approve the subdivision, so that we were properly following the ordinance. Alderwoman Lawson moved to table this action until a formal ordinance can be written subdividing the property.
- c. VARIANCE FOR 112 N THIRD ST.: This lot currently does not conform to the city ordinance for a lot this size. The current owner is having an issue getting it insured since the size does not conform, then the insurance company is not sure they can cover a like sized structure to be built on that land if it is not conforming to the zoning regulations. The Planning and Zoning Commission approved a variance for this property at its last meeting. Attorney Miller again stated that we would need the proper documentation to approve the variance. Alderwoman Lawson moved to table this action until proper documentation could be written.

XVI. COMMENTS BY THE ATTORNEY:

- a. AUTUMN FIELDS AGREEMENT: Attorney Miller and his assistant have been doing a deep dive on the Autumn Fields agreement and are looking into what remaining liabilities are for this contract.
- b. ERH CONTRACT: Reviewed and approved the ERH contract that was approved tonight.
- c. KELNHOFER ALLEY VACATION: Will have a formal document ready for this by the next meeting. Mayor Wise stated that we already passed this. Attorney Miller answered that there is a question regarding that action.

XVII. ADJOURNMENT:

- a. There being no further action to come before the council, Alderwoman K. Ferrell moved to adjourn the meeting. Alderman M. Ferrell seconded. Motion carried 7-0. Meeting adjourned.