

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES OF THE MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF ROCK FALLS

February 18th, 2014

The regular meeting of the Mayor and City Council of Rock Falls, Illinois was called to order at 6:30 p.m. February 18th, 2014 in the Council Chambers of Rock Falls by Mayor William B. Wescott.

City Clerk Eric Arduini called the roll following the pledge of allegiance. A quorum was present including Mayor William B. Wescott, Aldermen Vandersnick, Reitzel, Snow, Kuhlemier, Schuneman, Hand, Folsom, and Watts. In addition Attorney Tom Sanders, and City Administrator Blackert were also present.

Mayor Wescott requested that the 2014 State of the City Address be removed from the agenda. He reported that the city continues to receive questions, and he gave a report and timeline outlining the problems that happened this week with the sewer pump station. He reported that at 2:30 pm a no flow alarm was triggered at the sewer plant. After city crews found that the pump station was flooding with raw sewage, the city was forced to shut off water to the city at 3:20 pm. At 4:00 the city opened the operations center in the north conference room of city hall. The mayor gave press conferences to keep the public informed at 7:00pm, and 10:00pm, on Thursday and 8:00am on Friday. On Thursday by 9:45pm the city had 4 semi-trucks full of water, and 35 porta-pots set up for residents to use during this event. Chief Cook verified help from other Fire departments during this time. Wal-Mart, Kroger, and Culligan of Dixon helped supply drinking water for the city. Volunteers from the American Red Cross, Civil Air Patrol, and a wrestling team, along with numerous volunteers from around the city and surrounding areas helped to distribute the water to citizens. After the sewer department finished pumping out the 230,000 gallons of raw sewage from the pump station, and the motors were started, water service was restored. Samples were taken on Saturday at 7:30am, and at 7:00am on Sunday the city wide boil order was lifted.

Audience Requests:

Troy Ebenezer of 220 E. 10th Street asked the council if there are indicators at the pump station of electrical surges, and are there alarms at the pump station. Administrator Blackert explained that workers at the sewer plant and working in the field were not aware of the power outage, and that the alarms that should have alerted them failed. Mr. Ebenezer also inquired as to why water tankers from the National Guard were not used to supply water for the residents. The mayor stated that we did contact the armory, and when they contacted Springfield, it was stated that the city must first deplete all resources first as is protocol. The Wal-Mart Distribution center was able to supply the drinking water in better time, and without the need of containers for the residents.

Community Affairs:

Administrator Blackert reported that the Rock Falls Annual Chamber dinner will be held on February 27th at 6:00 pm at the Rock Falls, Days Inn. Basket and Bag Bingo will be held at the community building on March 8th. Tickets can be purchased at Sauk Valley Bank, or the Chamber Office. Summer Splash will be held on July 11th and 12th.

Ordinance First Reading:

A motion was made by Alderman Vandersnick, and second by Schuneman to approve the first reading of Ordinance 2014-2148 amending Municipal Code Section 16-50 to add MU-1 as a designated district.

Vote 8 aye, motion carried

A motion was made by alderman Hand, and second by Folsom to approve the consent agenda. Included in the consent agenda was to approve the minutes of the February 4th, 2014 council meeting, and approve the bills as presented. Alderman Kuhlemier noted that he had checked with the Clerk's Office on an expenditure of \$.46 for the IDC, and found that it was for postage.

Vote 8 aye, motion carried

City Administrator Robbin D, Blackert

Administrator Blackert stated that the city is looking for approval to begin lease negotiations with the IDNR for 2.2 miles of the Hennepin Canal property through Rock Falls. Adm. Blackert introduced Alderman Schuneman who is the Chairman of the Hennepin Canal – Trails Committee. Alderman Schuneman stated that there is a two-step process, and until we enter into lease negotiations, we will not be able to determine the costs to the city. The annexation will occur when we have negotiated a favorable lease with the IDNR. Alderman Watts stated that he has some hesitation due to the financial burden it may have on the city. Alderman Snow also expressed his concerns about fiscal responsibility. Alderman Hand stated the IDNR will still be mowing, and commented that the city will benefit by added economic development and tourism with the canal. A motion to begin lease negotiations was made by Alderman Kuhlemier, and second by Hand.

Vote 8 aye, motion carried

Information/Correspondence

Clerk Eric Arduini stated that the city had received a Certificate of recognition from the State of Illinois – 98th General Assembly House of Representatives presented by Representative Mike Smiddy for assisting the residents of Civic Plaza II during their evacuation.

Clerk Arduini informed the Council that he had received a letter of resignation from Kim Thome, She had worked with the city for 28 years, and served as the secretary for the Board of Police and Fire Commissioners. A motion to accept Kim Thome's resignation as secretary from the Board of Police and Fire Commissioners was made by Alderman Kuhlemier, and second by Schuneman

Viva Voce Vote, motion carried

Mr. Arduini also told the Council that he had received a thank you letter from the Sierens family for the city's efforts during the water outage.

Department Head Reports

Deputy Fire Chief Bill Milby informed the Council that he was notified last week about a \$12,000 small equipment grant that has been awarded to the Fire Department. This grant money has been designated to purchase new helmets. A motion was made by Alderman Vandersnick and second by Snow to accept the grant from the Illinois Fire Marshall for \$12,000.

Vote 8 aye, motion carried

Committee Reports

A Motion was made by Alderman Vandersnick, and second by Watts to accept the recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Commission for changes to the zoning of the downtown area to MU-1.

Vote 8 aye, motion carried

Ward Reports

Alderman Mark Vandersnick stated that he felt privileged to have seen everyone work together during the recent crisis, and he is proud to be part of the system.

Alderman Daehle Reitzel reported that he witnessed our crews working non-stop for 40 hours, and people drove up and thanked our crews for their hard work.

Alderman Brian Snow stated that having this situation handled in only 18 hours proves that having the training helps. He stated that a lot of good people and good minds came together to make this happen, and he was very proud to be a part of it.

Alderman David Hand echoed the other Alderman's comments, and said that he was grateful for all of the volunteers. He states that this shows how local control for utilities is better.

Alderman Schuneman thanked John Watts for his part, and thought it was a miracle that we had water and facilities so quickly.

Alderman Lee Folsom stated that he was proud of everyone, and they worked like clockwork to get this resolved.

Alderman John Watts said that he was happy to be part of the team. He gives thanks to WSDR, and Sauk Valley Media for sharing the city's Facebook posts immediately. He stated that this is what the Facebook site was set up for. He appreciates Mayor Wescott, and the workers, they're job was second to none. He stated that after the press conferences the

responses were very positive. He would like to remind everyone that the job is not yet done for our workers with this incident.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Bill Wescott explained to the council the request for authorization to send to the Rock Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau, NFP a Notice of Termination of the existing Hotel Tax Agreement, and Lease of Office Space both dated May 21st, 2008, and authorization to negotiate terms of a new agreement. A motion to give authorization was made by Alderman Schuneman, and second by Vandersnick. The Mayor opened the Council up for Public discussion.

Chris Schultz, an attorney from Quincy IL. was asked by the Rock Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau, NFP to represent their point of view on this matter. Mr. Schultz explained that in the agreement with the city either side could withdraw from the agreement for any reason as long as it was 60 days prior to the end of the fiscal year which is April 30th. He urges that the council take action to not take action, or to take action to postpone. He stated that the city adopted the hotel tax to promote tourism and overnight visitors. The City Code states that hotels collect money from travelers, and they turn that money over to the City Treasurer. The city code also states that the City may contract with entities, and that the treasurer pays all tourism income to that entity. The money is not to be used to promote competition. Mr. Schultz stated that if this agreement is terminated then the city would not negotiate in good faith, and that all parties should step back and negotiate to promote goals. Mr. Schultz pointed out that this is not an emergency and everyone involved could take time to review options.

Alderman Vandersnick stated that the convention and tourism office does a great job, but could work better with the city on projects.

Alderman Reitzel stated that if we waited and tried to negotiate for another 60 days, the time would be up and nothing would change for a year. He said that there were times the City should have gotten help from tourism, and didn't.

Alderman Snow said that Tourism had done a great job with promotion involving fliers, and signs. He said that there should be more cooperation with the promotion of the riverfront, and they could extent their arm when the city has a project that involves tourism.

Alderman Kuhlemier stated that there is no excuse for termination within 60 days. He stated that the tourism office has turned down projects, but it was because those projects did not meet the guidelines set for the office. The tourism money cannot be used for streets, and alleys, and they did help with the fountains. The city also receives rent and administration fees from their office.

Alderman Schuneman stated that he has no axe to grind with the Tourism office. He said that he was offended by Mr. Schultz stating that the city would not bargain in good faith, and we would sit down immediately to begin negotiations. He stated that 20 year agreements do not help either side.

Alderman Hand stated that the Tourism office does a fine job. He stated that they can only do certain things with the hotel tax money. He states that we should have sat down, and been working together to see what happened.

Alderman Folsom stated that this negotiations should have been taken up long ago.

Alderman Watts stated that neither side has taken this lightly. He states that the vision for the city, and the tourism board has changed since the original contract was written. This re-negotiation is necessary to get everything more up to date.

Mayor Wescott mentioned that as Mr. Schultz stated each Alderman was given the information to review, and the aldermen met with him do discuss this individually. He stated that between now and April 30th both sides will sit down and renegotiate.

Vote 5 Aye (Vandersnick, Reitzel, Snow, Schuneman, and Watts) - 3 No (Kuhlemier, Hand, Folsom), motion carried

A motion was made by Alderman Reitzel, and second by Vandersnick to enter executive session at 7:50 pm for Threatened or pending litigation section 2(c)(11)

Vote 8 Aye, motion carried

With nothing else for the good of the Council a motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Folsom, and second by Reitzel at 8:30pm

Eric Arduini, City Clerk