

CITY OF ST. JOHNS

CITY COMMISSION MINUTES

MARCH 20, 2023

The regular meeting of the St. Johns City Commission was called to order by Mayor Cocco at 6:00 p.m. at the Clinton County Courthouse, 100 East State Street, 2nd Floor, Suite #2200, St. Johns, Michigan.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Eric Hufnagel, Jean Ruestman, Brad Gurski, Roberta Cocco

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Scott Dzurka

STAFF PRESENT: Kristina Kinde, Interim City Manager/Treasurer; Mindy J. Seavey, City Clerk; Justin Smith, Director of Public Services; Anne Seurnyck, Attorney

Mayor Cocco asked if any of the commissioners wished to discuss any of the items on the consent agenda.

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the consent agenda be approved as presented.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

a. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the minutes of the February 27, 2023 regular meeting; special meeting of March 7, 2023; and closed session of March 7, 2023 special meeting be approved as presented.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

b. Approval of Warrants

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Gurski that warrants be approved as presented in the amount of \$1,814,157.99.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

c. Wombat Services, LLC – Detention Basin Mowing

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission approve using Wombat Services, LCC for detention basin mowing in the amount of \$19,100.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

d. Plummers Environmental - Contract for Sanitary and Storm Sewer Cleaning and Assessment/Water Service Line Investigations

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission approve the three-year contract with Plummers Environmental Services to perform sanitary, storm and water services per their unit pricing listed in the attached contract pending city attorney approval and authorize the mayor and clerk to sign.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

e. C2AE – Proposal for Professional Services – Develop 2023 Street Program Bid Package Standard Contract

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission approve the proposal with C2AE in a lump sum amount of \$7,300.00 with the proposed changes from the city attorney and authorize the mayor and clerk to sign.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

f. C2AE – Proposal for Professional Services – St. Johns BR US-127 at Walker Road Intersection Improvements

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission approve the proposal with C2AE with time and material not to exceed \$22,350 plus reimbursable expenses with the proposed changes from the city attorney and authorize the mayor and clerk to sign.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

AGENDA

Mayor Cocco asked if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda. She asked to add under New Business #1 - Discussion around next steps for RFP's as it relates to gym, auditorium and build out for city hall.

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission approve the agenda as amended.

AGENDA**A. OPENING:**

1. Invocation
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Consent Agenda

The staff proposes the following items for the Consent Agenda. If any Commissioner wishes to discuss any of these items, it should be placed on the regular agenda. The remaining items and recommendations may be approved en masse:

- a. Approval of Minutes
 - Regular meeting of February 27, 2023
 - Special meeting of March 7, 2023
 - Closed session of March 7, 2023
- b. Approval of Warrants
 - In the amount of \$1,814,157.99
- c. Wombat Services, LLC – Detention Basin Mowing
 - Staff recommends that the city commission approve using Wombat Services, LCC for detention basin mowing in the amount of \$19,100.
- d. Plummers Environmental - Contract for Sanitary and Storm Sewer Cleaning and Assessment/Water Service Line Investigations
 - Staff recommends that the city commission approve the three-year contract with Plummers Environmental Services to perform sanitary, storm and water services per their unit pricing listed in the attached contract pending city attorney approval and authorize the mayor and clerk to sign.
- e. C2AE – Proposal for Professional Services – Develop 2023 Street Program Bid Package Standard Contract
 - Staff recommends that the city commission approve the proposal with C2AE in a lump sum amount of \$7,300.00 with the proposed changes from the city attorney and authorize the mayor and clerk to sign.
- f. C2AE – Proposal for Professional Services – St. Johns BR US-127 at Walker Road Intersection Improvements
 - Staff recommends that the city commission approve the proposal with C2AE with time and material not to exceed \$22,350 plus reimbursable

expenses with the proposed changes from the city attorney and authorize the mayor and clerk to sign.

4. Approval of Agenda:

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

C. PERSONS WISHING TO PRESENT TESTIMONY:

1. Public comment - agenda & non-agenda items
2. Tom Webb – Clinton County Arts Council

D. COMMUNICATIONS:

1. Letter from Bill Tennant regarding the Wilson Center
2. Letter from Cindy Knight regarding the Wilson Center
3. Notes from Ken Harris regarding the Downtown Parking Plan

E. OLD BUSINESS:

1. 2023 Downtown Parking Plan
2. St. Johns Communications Ad Hoc Advisory Group

F. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Discussion around next steps for RFP's as it relates to gym, auditorium and build out for city hall
2. Resolution for Designation of Street Administrator - #5-2023
3. City Manager Search Contract with Walsh Municipal Services and Job Posting and Salary Range Discussion
4. Resolution #6-2023 - DNR Trust Fund Grant Application – City Park Improvements (Pickleball/Basketball Court)
5. Resolution #7-2023 - DNR Trust Fund Grant Application - Main City Park Improvements (Softball Field)
6. Resolution #8-2023 - DNR Passport Grant Application - Main City Park Improvements (Softball Field)
7. Parks and Recreation Board Recommendation – Proposed Main Park Playground Renovation (Fantasy Forest)
8. Parks and Recreation Board Recommendation – Main Park Road Closure
9. Water & Sewer Rates
10. Commissioner Comments

G. ADJOURNMENT:

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PERSONS WISHING TO PRESENT TESTIMONY

1. Public Comment

Mayor Cocco asked if there were any public comments.

Bruce DeLong, 900 N. Oakland, county commissioner and business owner was present. He discussed the county has experienced similar a situation where they were going to invest in a new structure and the cost went from \$35 million to \$78 million and the structure is on hold. He encouraged them to look at the costs before they continue the Wilson Center.

Ed Thelen, city resident for 30 years, was present. He discussed items #4-8 on the agenda. He said he is on the Parks and Recreation Board and they had a very good meeting and good public support. He encouraged the commission's support and approval on the 3 grants, Fantasy Forest, and closing off the road in the park.

Tracy Kossaras, 1208 Glastonbury, business owner, and on the DDA and parking committee was present. She discussed they spent a long-time discussing parking and got to an agreement on parking and everyone agreed on the board agreed except one person and it got delayed. She said she would like them to go ahead with the parking that was decided on.

Amber Lynn Haubert, resident, business owner, and DDA & parking committee member was present. She discussed her concerns with the parking presentation; questioned why our director would be presenting the plan; did discuss this and vote to make approval; many board members wanted to see the complete presentation from Dave and they have yet to do so; not been able to see it as a board; like to see our concerns are all a part of that plan and several items that still are not included in presentation; she asked that no decision be made tonight; a downtown conference she attended that would be willing to give a free parking consultation (2 different companies); no parking plan is better than one with loose ends; and bring professionals in.

Adam Baudoux, 5642 North Lowell Road and downtown business owner was present. He said he is not in favor of the Wilson Center project. He discussed several factors such as lack of official and current bids; said it is hard to be accurate; lack of transparency; he questioned the necessity of this project; and it seems important to consider if it is the best use of taxpayer dollars. Also, he seconded everything Amber mentioned about parking.

Aaron Stine, 9029 West Taft Road and business owner was present. He discussed his dissatisfaction for the Wilson Center project; the purpose of projects by the government;

gym could be built for a far cheaper price and city offices can be maintained at the courthouse for no additional expense; a 3rd party audit of the project should be conducted; potential lack of follow through; in his opinion misuses tax revenues for potential profit of developer; building maintenance required is a massive liability; failure to manage funds effectively and misappropriation of taxpayer dollars; and he volunteered his time to find more cost effective measures to solve the problem.

Andrew McDonald, 1105 S Wight Street, resident and business owner was present to discuss the Wilson Center and parks and recreation in general. He discussed renovation of the Wilson Center supporting what the city actually needs and size appropriate; enough resource for the growth we need in our town; having a larger facility will allow club sports to come to our city; make sure we meet what we are trying to accomplish.

Marilyn Woodbury was present to discuss the RBW project. She discussed she sent a message to a commissioner; there is a big controversy over RBW; tragedy to think about and the countless students who have passed through the halls and the memories; she was member of the class of 1959; not in favor of the building being torn down; most schools we had have been torn down; and it might have been a good idea to let the citizens be able to vote on this.

Travis Delong, 1100 Searles Estates, was present. He discussed tax dollars spent on efficient structures; bring young families from surrounding territories; if want to have younger families to invest in the city he thinks their priorities should be acknowledged and listened to; and invest in our future.

Jason Miller, business owner of Bitlyft at 107 N. Clinton, was present. He discussed his experience with buying an older building; time and materials and cost of labor going up; project he had laid out was 300 times what he built; contractors not showing up or coming back with changes; due diligence; expect overages; why you are moving and the pain you are trying to solve; is the city in a healthy spot; a building that age is not fit for a city facility, but maybe for a private company that has bought those buildings before; look at expenses; would a new building suffice; operational efficiency; and building and lawn maintenance.

Jim Gunther, 1221 LaValle Court, and resident for 45 years was present. He said he has been to several meetings and the people against it seem to have the opinion you have no idea what you are doing and they seem to emphasize you haven't looked at everything. He discussed it is already owned by a for-profit developer; city is looking to purchase part of that; involved in the Wilson Center since 2006 and developing the Sesquicentennial pageant; a lot of the renovation of the Wilson Center has already been done by groups; nobody wants to go without activities for kids; cost of purchasing land,

infrastructure, etc. for a new building; wiring and lights in the Wilson Center have been done; business alone does not drive people that want to be part of the community; cultural events have brought in a lot of people. He said he doesn't envy your position at all.

Karen Kusenda, 302 S. Morton Street and resident for 45 years was present. She discussed concerns are from community standpoint; hear a lot about we need sports and she doesn't disagree, but not everybody in the community is going to use a gym, baseball field, soccer field; drawing people to a well-rounded community: history, sports, and a healthy business district; it is important we don't look at what's only available to people or what they think they want right this minute; her mother was the director and founder of the museum; have structure of that building and it may not be "A number 1" for every sport we want to do, but it is a space that should be used; a company is already taking care of that; we should have available the theater and gymnasium and what the city wants to do with offices needs some thinking; and the best way to use space to honor everyone.

Denise Starck, 110 E. Higham Street, was present. She asked what does it cost the city to be in this building now?

Mayor Cocco said public comments is not a place for back-and-forth discussion.

Ms. Starck asked if the city will publish the information at some time?

Mayor Cocco said they will address the concerns.

Ethan Painter, 4266 S. Forest Hill Road and owner of Waypoint Coffee was present. He discussed what he has seen and heard and reading through meeting minutes; he does not believe it is the best way to use taxpayer dollars; what is the cost and what is the concern; it seems like the project is being rushed without due diligence; and he asked them to slow down.

Jason Denovich, 1203 Lincolnshire, and business owner was present. He discussed Fantasy Forest and urged them to approve the project concept; he understands at this time there may not be funds available in the city's budget; the community fund would really like to see this project happen and they will fundraise; they have a motivated board; he believes the parks serve everyone; the city park is probably one venue in town that services everyone; he urged the commission to itemize the priorities of the vast majority of St. Johns; safe areas for youth; he is extremely opposed to the Wilson Center; he loves the building and appreciates Dymaxion, but he thinks taxpayer money can be spent better elsewhere.

Mayor Cocco said she appreciated the engagement.

2. Tom Webb – Clinton County Arts Council

Tom Webb, Clinton County Arts Council, was present. He said one correction is the gym is a full-size court, it has a divider, and 6 baskets in the gym. He said it bothers him there is misinformation. He said he received a request to come before the commission and was given a list of questions. He is the current President of the Clinton County Arts Council and has been on the board for approximately 20 years. He said the CCAC is divided into branches: Art and Soul Gallery, Wilson Center Auditorium Committee, Home Grown Productions, Mint City Singers, and Clinton Railway Museum (which is going by the wayside); their membership is from a wide variety of areas; 100 paid members with a mailing/e-mailing list of over 640; events sponsored: Chalk it Up, Chocolate Walk, Concert in the Park summer series (partner with the city, \$6000-\$7000 each year from the city and the city owns the park and music shell); sponsor many events at the Wilson Center auditorium (2-page list of everything we have hosted since end of pandemic); sponsor of murals downtown and the underpass; the city funds only for concerts in the park and no other city funds have ever been given to the arts council; city has supported them through resolutions and participation; they rented the train depot for a railway museum; railway cars are owned by the arts council. He said they also rented the auditorium through the school district and then Dymaxion and in both cases they were our landlords, but treated us more as partners. He said the city has been using gymnasium for quite some time. He said due to the pandemic and now the boiler they have been unable to host many events. He said he was asked about revenue for the auditorium and they met all rental obligations for the rental space. He discussed events in the auditorium: last July, St. Joseph Catholic Church held services there due to reconstruction; during the Sesquicentennial they hosted a pageant and made some money. When we try to book time in the school's auditorium, those dates were unavailable. He discussed: they replaced over 400 seats; replaced the entire sound system; entire lighting system, entrance to the back of the stage with new doors, rewired auditorium; repainted auditorium and lobby of auditorium. He said their fundraising was through sponsorships, grant writing, volunteer work, and paid labor (electricians) and they received no government funding. He said every show they did if they made a profit, they gave 75% back to the auditorium fund. He said the St. Johns Foundation for Excellence handles that money. He said they have a little bit of money left with the arts council, restricted fund of \$23,000 - \$26,000 they can only use to make improvements. They talked about upgrading the sound system to be more digital, carpeting, and replacing curtains. He said asbestos is not present in the auditorium. He said he was asked about the vision of the future of the arts council and said before the pandemic they were required to develop a 3-year plan. He said they are addressing that this year again and it is a 3-year rolling plan. He said their general goals are to look to increase presence in the community and arts and

culture experience for the community with a wide range of programs. He said he was asked to describe future partners for shows and events: Homegrown usually plans 3 shows; Mint City Singers do 2 concerts; and they will establish working relationships with management companies that represent performers. He said he was working with Smokin' Sled Dog Records and they have an office in Nashville. They want to continue hosting visiting performers: Singers on the Grand (Favorite place to perform); Starlight Dinner Theatre (they love our stage); dance recitals or performances could be done there; promoting more youth theatre; a fall through spring concert series similar to concerts in the park. He said he got this request on Wednesday and it was a short amount of time to put the information together. He said he doesn't envy you and the decision you have to make. He said he thinks we need to look at what's best for the community and maybe a long-term plan.

Mayor Cocco thanked him for coming in. She asked about the average turnout or revenue for the average show.

Mr. Webb said their treasurer keeps that information. He said they have never taken a loss on a show and usually clear between \$1500-\$3000 on performances. Since the pandemic, they have seen attendance increase 30-40%. He said the auditorium seats 400 and you can make a profit on running that.

COMMUNICATIONS

1. Letter from Bill Tennant regarding the Wilson Center
2. Letter from Cindy Knight regarding the Wilson Center
3. Notes from Ken Harris regarding the Downtown Parking Plan

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission acknowledge receipt of communications.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

1. 2023 Downtown Parking Plan

Interim City Manager Kinde said on December 12th the former city manager was asked to take the plan back to the DDA. She discussed that Dave met with the board and they recommended a sub-committee and he met with the sub-committee twice. She said there is one small slight change, it should be Brush Street from Walker to Railroad instead of

M-21 to Railroad, there is an error on there. She said she wasn't part of that discussion, but the DDA Director was so we asked her to come to speak.

Director Hanover discussed a history of the process that began last year in the spring; the DDA Board Parking sub-committee (first meeting on June 15 of 2022); the issues regarding downtown parking; the DDA held 5 subcommittee meetings; in January they held two more meetings; February 2023 it was added to the agenda and the board approved the plan; only in favor of a few handicap spots on Clinton Avenue; Bruce DeLong still has concerns on Maple and Linden Streets (county part of the plan); she also attended the conference last week and they talked about redistributing parking needs and different prices (heavily used areas more expensive to park at); Chief of Police was there a couple of times and his issue is trouble enforcing (need specific rules for spaces so they are easy to enforce such as permit only); made those changes in this plan. She said will this plan be the end & forever plan, no probably not. She said we need to have something starting on April 1st.

Mayor Cocco said she appreciated her coming and presenting.

There was a discussion of:

- The full DDA board voted in support of the plan
- On-street overnight parking spaces and concerns
- Parking lots
- Education & signage
- Using current infrastructure we have in place
- Downtown parking has been discussed for years with many meetings; consultant did a parking study 5-6 years ago
- Ability to adapt the plan
- Timeline
- On-street overnight parking as it relates to utilities/snow plowing
- Timeline, signs, education and enforcement
- Holding on on-street overnight parking for Maple & Linden Streets; further discussion with the county
- 2 ADA spots on Clinton Avenue
- Honoring the work that is put in by committees and their recommendations

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Ruestman that the city commission move forward the with downtown parking plan as presented with the exception of Linden and Maple Streets and that staff work on a timeline, enforcement, signage, and communication.

Mayor Cocco discussed her objections to on-street overnight parking on North Clinton Avenue and Railroad.

There was a discussion of amending the motion and adding staff work on a timeline, enforcement, signage, and communication.

There was a vote on the motion.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski

NAY: Cocco

Motion carried.

2. St. Johns Communications Ad Hoc Advisory Group

Interim City Manager Kinde said city staff was asked to bring this back regarding the make-up of the committee. She said it was requested that in lieu of 5 citizens it be partial citizens and partial business owners.

Mayor Cocco said she received some requests and they extend past the city limits. She said some people approached her, but they don't reside in the city limits. She said we don't have to have a staff member on the advisory group.

Commissioner Hufnagel asked what the parameters are for membership (2 commissioners, 1 staff member, up to 5 citizens). He asked if it was brought back for discussion to include business owners. He said he understands business owners, but what is the value of bringing people in from the outside.

Mayor Cocco said we often are drawing people in from the outside, people that call St. Johns home and are in our school district, but don't live in St. Johns.

Commissioner Gurski said he is in support of that. He said St. Johns is bigger than the physical boundaries. He said he wouldn't want that group to have a larger presence than our residents.

There was a discussion of the possible change to membership and clarifying it.

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission approve changing make-up of the ad hoc committee to 2 actual residents of city, 2 business owners inside city limits, and 1 person outside of city limits within the 48879-zip code.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion around next steps for RFP's as it relates to gym, auditorium and build out for city hall

Mayor Cocco said we were unable to acquire RFP's or bids for actual numbers until the architectural drawings were completed and they have now been completed which would allow us to bring in Spicer, our engineering firm, to create those RFP's.

Interim City Manager Kinde said the construction documents would have to be developed as a part of that; we don't have the construction documents complete. She said they were discussed in a January meeting and talked about moving forward with construction documents, but then staff was put on hold. We worked through the condo documents. She said we have a list of items related to the gym and auditorium we could begin working on. We still need to get with our architect for construction documents related to those for those items on the gym and auditorium. We could do them separate, or gym and auditorium, then do the city office space for if and when you want to do city offices. We have received a quote from our architect for the whole project, but we could ask him to revise it for just the gym and auditorium for bring that back for approval and we could start a bid process at that time.

Commissioner Gurski said he thinks that would be key: option "a" gym and auditorium, and option "b" city offices.

Mayor Cocco said the next step is to ask the architect to create construction documents to allow us to bid so we will have information to get costs together.

Interim City Manager Kinde said we would want him to put construction documents together related to those items and they would be used for to put out for bid. We have a list of items we are looking to possibly do in the gym and auditorium, but not the documents to actually bid it out yet.

There was a discussion of the process:

- Bring back the cost for the construction documents from the architect.
- Move forward at the next regular meeting or add it to the special meeting.

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission have staff get bids from the architect for construction documents for the auditorium and gym.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

Commissioner Ruestman said we talked about needing a FAQ and bulleted list of what is done.

Interim City Manager Kinde said we are working with King Media and will have documents for our website and a FAQ and we are in the process on doing that.

2. Resolution for Designation of Street Administrator - #5-2023

Interim City Manager Kinde said the city is required to have a street administrator and Dave Kudwa was that individual. She said staff recommends the city commission appoint Justin Smith.

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission adopt Resolution #5-2023.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

3. City Manager Search Contract with Walsh Municipal Services and Job Posting and Salary Range Discussion

Interim City Manager Kinde said at the February meeting the commission approved moving forward with Frank Walsh. She said we are asking you approve the contract that has been approved by the city attorney. She said the city personnel committee met on March 9th and we recommend the approval of the search document and salary range.

Frank Walsh was present on Zoom. He said the market has really changed over the last year or 6 months and salaries have increased significantly. He said the market is \$125,000 - \$140,000 and a salary range of \$124,000 - \$138,000 should make us competitive. He said there are a number of vacancies in Michigan right now, but a number of them are not in the central Michigan areas which is going to help us.

Mayor Cocco said they had a great discussion with Frank and appreciated his insight. She acknowledged his experience and that the market has changed.

Commissioner Ruestman said she felt comfortable and we worked well with him in the past and that seems reasonable.

Mayor Cocco said \$124,000 - \$138,000 is the range.

Mr. Walsh said he listened to the meeting and the commission is doing a great job handling difficult issues.

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission accept the package and job posting as indicated in the packet.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

4. Resolution #6-2023 - DNR Trust Fund Grant Application – City Park Improvements (Pickleball/Basketball Court)

Recreation Director Schafer said this is the first of 3 grant applications to be submitted to the DNR. He said this one is for redoing the basketball/tennis courts. He said they would like to add pickleball, parking spaces, sidewalk, drinking fountains, benches, and bleachers. He said this is a 50% match and the more money we put towards it the more points we get. He said the grants are due April 1st; the DNR evaluates the grants in August/September and they send back information and you get a chance to revise your application and resubmit; in December they make a decision on which grants to fund. If we are selected, we will get an agreement in the springtime and have 2 years to complete the project.

There was a discussion of the project.

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission adopt Resolution #6-2023 DNR Trust Fund Grant Application – City Park Improvements (Pickleball/Basketball Court).

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

5. Resolution #7-2023 - DNR Trust Fund Grant Application - Main City Park Improvements (Softball Field)

Recreation Director Schafer said this one is also a trust fund application. He said he wants to finish what we started in 2016 with the grant for the softball fields. He said the DNR has also funded small development grants and they sometimes fund less than \$50,000 automatically so we catered this one to be in that \$50,000 or less amount. We would be replacing the rest of the fencing along the west side, move the outfield fence,

add a bigger warning track, add sidewalks connecting to the spray park and to the bathrooms. He said we may not run the sidewalk all the way because there is a connector by the main pavilion. We would also add irrigation to the outfield.

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission adopt Resolution #7-2023.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

6. Resolution #8-2023 - DNR Passport Grant Application - Main City Park Improvements (Softball Field)

Recreation Director Schafer said the DNR has a passport grant so we are applying for the same exact project. If we get one grant, we have to withdraw from the other grant. He said this grant caters to redevelopment of existing facilities.

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Ruestman that the city commission adopt Resolution #8-2023.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

7. Parks and Recreation Board Recommendation – Proposed Main Park Playground Renovation (Fantasy Forest)

Recreation Director Schafer said Jason Denovich was at the last meeting discussing Fantasy Forest and he came back with a revised drawing. He said they would do this project more in phases. He said the main structure is \$740,000 and is still a lot of money. He discussed other grants they can apply for. He said they wanted to form a subcommittee between the Parks and Recreation Board, staff and the St. Johns Area Community Fund board and have Jason Butler serve as the chairperson on that committee. He also said if any commissioners want to be on it also.

There was a discussion of:

- Trying to honor the donors from the original Fantasy Forest project.
- The type of committee and whether it would be a subcommittee of the Parks and Recreation Board or an ad hoc committee.
- The timeline for the project.

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Ruestman that the city commission approve the project concept and allow the Parks and Recreation Board to work with the St. Johns Community Fund to develop and implement a plan to replace the Fantasy Forest Playground through fundraising and assign Jason Butler as Chairperson of the ad hoc committee (with combination of community fund and parks and recreation committee).

There was a discussion of:

- Approving the concept.
- It would be an asset to the community and a destination spot.

There was a vote on the motion.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

8. Parks and Recreation Board Recommendation – Main Park Road Closure

Recreation Director Schafer said this proposal is to create more walkability in park by closing dirt roads on the west side of park. He said it would also hopefully eliminate issues we have had with vehicles tearing up the sledding hill. He said they would still have access to the sledding hill during a different timeframe. He discussed: from Park Street the yellow section would be open seasonally from December 1 – March 31; red part would be closed the whole year. He said during Mint Festival they use that so they would put something there that is moveable. He said staff needs direction from the commission you approve the concept and we can go out and look for ways to limit access.

There was a discussion of:

- The Mint Festival and the yellow road being seasonal.
- Additional parking when the volleyball courts get done.
- The idea was brought up formally last summer.

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission direct staff to look into the cost associated with implementing this plan and bring it back to the April 24th city commission meeting.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

9. Water & Sewer Rates

Interim City Manager Kinde said at our last meeting Andy Campbell did a presentation on water/sewer rates. She said the last time it was presented the commission approved a 3% increase. She said Baker Tilly recommended increasing rates 3-5%. She said we need a recommendation for fiscal year 23/24 year and also the next 4 years. She said it is important to have 5 years for the bonding processes. We can change it every year, but we need a rough approval for 5 years. She said a 1% increase is \$3 per quarter for the average water bill and \$5 per quarter for the average sewer bill.

There was a discussion of:

- We currently have a 3% increase.
- The projects for sewer upgrades in the next 10 years.
- This bonding discussion is not related to the Wilson Center; two different situations.
- Being mindful of our rates in the region.
- Keeping the 3% this year and next year may have to make a tougher decision.
- We will be updating our rate study annually.

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission stick with the 3% for the duration of the 5-year plan; revisit in another year.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

10. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Ruestman said the library is seeking federal earmarks and grants for their building renovation. They are anxious to get started and improve the use of the building. She said they are working on a fundraiser that you will see signs about in the near future and you will get a call. She discussed making the space more useful to the community.

Commissioner Hufnagel acknowledged the time and effort put in by residents and business owners in the committees we have and said a lot of people are doing a lot of great work. Thank you all for putting time in to help make the city a great place to live.

Commissioner Gurski said the ambulance board had a meeting last week. He said they raised salaries for the 23/24 budget and they are doing a great job of holding onto people now. He said there has been action to address mental health challenges related to the work they do and folks are never given enough credit for what they do. They are every bit as important as a doctor and have been undervalued and underpaid for far too long. He said their structure is working well and they have a good team there and a good drive. He said they did increase their rates (doubled) related to the commercial aspect of

insurance and they are trying to overcome shortfalls. He urged folks to be considerate of time spent and said there is a lot of information and that some of that is not correct. He said to reach out to the city or FOIA information. He said this is a long process and there is a long way to go; this is just the start of it. He said he appreciated the comments and we are listening.

Mayor Cocco said she appreciated everybody coming out and it is nice to see engagement and commitment from the community. She said they do have an ad hoc communications advisory board and this is a great opportunity to get involved or share the opportunity with someone you know. She said to go out to our website. She said she appreciated the commissioners and the work.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the meeting be adjourned.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Cocco

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.