

**CITY OF ST. JOHNS**

**CITY COMMISSION MINUTES**

**AUGUST 26, 2024**

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

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Eric Hufnagel, Jean Ruestman, Brad Gurski, Chris Hyzer

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Scott Dzurka

STAFF PRESENT: Chad Gamble, City Manager; Kristina Kinde, City Treasurer; Mindy J. Seavey, City Clerk; Justin Smith, Director of Public Services; Courtney Agrusa, City Attorney (Zoom); Ethan Walthorn, McKenna

Vice Mayor Gurski asked if any of the commissioners or persons present wished to discuss any of the items on the consent agenda.

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

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

a. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the minutes of the July 22, 2024 regular meeting be approved as presented.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

b. Receipt of Warrants

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that warrants be approved as presented in the amount of \$4,177,416.58.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

c. National Night Out Donation Summary

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission accept the memo and summary of donations per the City Donation Policy.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

d. Wastewater Department Building 3 and Building 6 Roof Replacement

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission approve the agreement and quote from Superior Services to replace the roofs on Buildings 3 and 6 in the amount of \$63,800.00.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

e. 2026 Dump Truck Chassis

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission approve the MI-DEAL quote from D&K Truck of \$144,757 for a 2026 Western star chassis.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

f. 2026 Dump Truck Outfitting

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission approve the formal bid from Shults Equipment LLC of \$107,951.00 for outfitting the 2026 Western-Star chassis with snow removal equipment.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

g. AMI Fixed Network Reading Equipment

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission approve the three AMI Fixed Network Readers from Ferguson Waterworks in the amount of \$136,634.50.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Hyzer

NAY: None  
Motion carried.

### AGENDA

Vice Mayor Gurski asked if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission approve the agenda as presented.

### 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 minutes of July 22, 2024
- b. Receipt of Warrants
  - In the amount of \$4,177,416.58
- c. National Night Out Donation Summary
  - Staff recommends the City Commission accept the memo and summary of donations per the City Donation Policy.
- d. Wastewater Department Building 3 and Building 6 Roof Replacement
  - Staff recommends the City Commission approve the agreement and quote from Superior Services to replace the roofs on Buildings 3 and 6 in the amount of \$63,800.00.
- e. 2026 Dump Truck Chassis
  - Staff recommends the City Commission approve the MI-DEAL quote from D&K Truck of \$144,757 for a 2026 Western star chassis.
- f. 2026 Dump Truck Outfitting
  - Staff recommends the City Commission approve the formal bid from Shults Equipment LLC of \$107,951.00 for outfitting the 2026 Western-Star chassis with snow removal equipment.
- g. AMI Fixed Network Reading Equipment
  - Staff recommends the City Commission approve the three AMI Fixed Network Readers from Ferguson Waterworks in the amount of \$136,634.50.
4. Approval of Agenda:

**B. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

**C. PERSONS WISHING TO PRESENT TESTIMONY:**

1. Public comment - agenda & non-agenda items

**D. COMMUNICATIONS:**

**E. OLD BUSINESS:**

1. Rental Inspection Ordinance and Fee Schedule Amendments – Resolution to Adopt #35-2024

**F. NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Landscaping Waiver for 108 E. Railroad Street and Recommended Zoning Amendment - Landscaping
2. City Manager Comments
3. Commissioner Comments

**G. ADJOURNMENT:**

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PERSONS WISHING TO PRESENT TESTIMONY

1. Public Comment

Vice Mayor Gurski asked if there were any public comments.

City Manager Gamble said we have been working hard to encourage interns and mentoring them and give them an opportunity to build on their future. He said the first of the second wave of interns is here. He introduced Olyvia Coon from Ovid Elsie. He said she follows the footsteps of Genevieve, who graduated. She is a wonderful addition to our St. Johns family.

Olyvia Coon was present. She said she is a senior at Ovid Elsie High School; part of the Varsity volleyball and softball teams; a major part of the school's radio station which is the only 365 day/24 hour polka radio station, she does a daily news cast and is a sports broadcaster; she joined RESA last year in the audio and visual production class and learned to use the equipment and software. She said Genna was in her class and

recommended her and Ms. Branch contacted her. She said she loves it here so far and the experience has been great.

City Manager Gamble said Olyvia is a go-getter and contributed to the infamous videos we have. He said the younger generation has a lot to offer and a lot to teach.

Ken Harris, 4417 Sailfish Lane, Palmetto, FL, was present. He discussed the rental plan; he served on the committee; disappointed to see changes being made already; didn't want a program like Lansing that is very intrusive and pushed out their middle renters; wanted to get rid of life threatening items; Autumn Ridge and Suntime aren't going to have a lot of those issues; a big company will have to hire people and it is going to add more cost; we came up with a random picking of so many units; hate to see St. Johns go to a program like Lansing; questioned why he wasted his time serving for those years on a sub-committee for those rules to be thrown out.

Mary Irish, owner of Autumn Ridge Apartments, was present. She discussed she is concerned; Corunna charges \$65 every 3 years; this is a lot of money; Lansing Township does not charge anything; and she doesn't understand why it is so high here.

Heather Hanover, PSD/DDA Director, was present. She thanked city staff for everything they did during the Mint Festival. It was a very successful event, and they saw increased participation.

Ed Thelen, 110 W. Cass, was present. He wanted to give a public thank you to Jeremy Ritter and Justin Smith. He said they have done a great job keeping us informed with the Cass Street update. He thanked the chief for not ticketing us.

## COMMUNICATIONS

### OLD BUSINESS

#### 1. Rental Inspection Ordinance and Fee Schedule Amendments – Resolution to Adopt #35-2024

Ethan from McKenna was present. He discussed the proposed amendment for the rental agreement registration; what the ordinance proposes; and every non-owner-occupied dwelling is inspected.

City Manager Gamble said he appreciated the comments from Mr. Harris and Ms. Irish. He discussed: very small tweaks to the rental inspection checklist based on safety and welfare of tenants; there are no wholesale changes to what we are looking for or what

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safety issues we are looking for; 3 different categories: snowbird clause – non 100% exemption property who does not rent it out or lease it out, not required to be listed in the program and an affidavit would have to be submitted; as opposed to a sampling of the inspections of rental properties, adding all properties, insures every three years the rental unit would be inspected, only impacts units of 4 or more; research done in regards to the fees: Lansing, Delta Charter Township, Meridian Township; McKenna's total contract for this year, 2 days for rental inspection and code enforcement assistance, total contract is \$70,000, depending on the number of inspections, between \$40,000 and \$50,000 for the rental inspection program, we are not even paying for McKenna's time let alone other city staff time; trying to right-size the fee structure; if we did all the inspections it would come to \$63,175.00; was touted as all units would be paid for, but only a scattering would be inspected; team talked after first year, why request fees and not inspect them all; appeal of the registration, if someone feels they should not have to be registered; we want to be able to offer good rental properties; we are blessed with a lot of good landlords; and we want to insure that continues in the least intrusive way possible.

There was a discussion of:

- The current fee is \$175.
  - That will not change in this proposed ordinance.
  - When the fee was calculated originally, it was based on estimated amount of cost but across 1,083 units instead of 661. We realized the fee would not cover the cost of the current program at 661 units. All invoices that went out were calculated at \$175 per unit, not per unit inspected.
- Time per inspection for McKenna.
  - Between 20-30 minutes, plus report writing and all that goes into it.
  - Depends on what has to be input into the system.
- Has the Planning Commission discussed these changes?
  - No, purview resides within the city commission and not the planning commission.
- Discussions with landlords?
  - We sent information out to landlords and asked them to provide feedback.
- Checklist changes.

Commissioner Hufnagel said Ken Harris was very involved in the first round of creating this and he hopes he doesn't think this was a waste of his time. He said there were a lot of things taken into consideration that Ken brought up. There was a lot of input from landlords, including Ken. Our intent when it was created was it would be looked at in a year.

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There was a discussion of:

- Letters sent to the landlord for the checklist or for this ordinance change?
  - This ordinance change.
- Will McKenna be here more than two days a week?
  - No. Approximately, 60% on rental inspection and 40% on code. We brought Ken in for an additional day because of the workload for the rental inspection program and additional code/permit assistance.
- Would we then be generating revenue?
  - 1,083 inspections would raise \$63,175 per year; McKenna's contract is \$70,000 which does not pay for any city staff involvement.
- Is the city adding staff for the program?
  - No.
  - Initial year was a lot of initial costs and software costs (had to be built out by BS&A), a lot of upfront costs to this program as well. Potential after the 3 years, the \$175 could change for the next 3 years.
- Discussed we would evaluate every year and then decide after 3 years if fees would go down; labor fees do tend to go up.
- Appeal section in ordinance; so many days to appeal to the city commission?
- Appeal fee, reduce to nominal amount or set to \$0?
- 100% non-PRE concern - shouldn't be bothering folks that have two homes.
  - Nuances that came up in the first year of program; there were attempts to circumvent the rental program.

Motion by Commission Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Ruestman that the city commission adopt Resolution #35-2024.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman

NAY: Gurski, Hyzer

Motion failed.

### NEW BUSINESS

#### 1. Landscaping Waiver for 108 E. Railroad Street and Recommended Zoning Amendment - Landscaping

City Manager Gamble discussed the ordinance and said it lacks an administrative waiver. He said this would take away a requirement that would be physically impossible, shrubs and trees. He said there would be a small opportunity to add vertical landscape to the library, but not 36 trees and 72 shrubs.

Ethan from McKenna discussed goals #1 and #2 of the Master Plan.

There was a discussion of the waiver.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Ruestman that the city commission grant the waiver to the library for the landscaping requirements.

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The city commission directed the city manager and staff to have the planning commission review and send the city commission any zoning amendments for the landscaping requirements in the future.

## 2. City Manager Comments

City Manager Gamble discussed:

- Thank you again to City Staff, especially Kristina and Justin for covering for me while I was off on vacation.
  - Our city shined bright via the Mint Festival and National Night Out (well done to entire city team for this huge lift for our moniker event).
- Parking Lot 5B, as noted in my letter to the effected parties, coming up to a fork in the road. We are very, very hopeful that we will be able to achieve 100% participation. However, if we are not able to obtain signatures in the next several weeks, at the September meeting we would like to present alternative options for paving yet this fall.
- Prevail Solar, after a previous partner chose a factory location in South Carolina, has renewed their vigor of standing up a solar panel manufacturing facility at the old Federal Mogul site. They hope to have the factory start production by the summer of 2025 and have 100 workers staffing the facility by the end of 2025.
- With summer (aka orange barrel season) we have our share of orange barrels around town. For this update I will turn the floor over to Justin Smith, our Director of Public Services.
  - Director Smith discussed the street program: Cass Street, gained 17 parking spots when switched over to angle parking; moved onto Oakland Street, a block and a half completed there; Sturgis Street; small amount on Lindy Lane; Brush Street; then North Lansing Street. Cement contractors, we are happy to get them for a couple of days. Paving schedule for Cass, hoped to come in today, possibly this week. We will have a meeting with business owners prior to Brush Street, probably at least two weeks away. On August 14<sup>th</sup>, County Commissioner Bruce Delong informed us MDOT released money to M-21 for a mill and fill this year, both driving lanes. Proposed date of September 3<sup>rd</sup> to begin.



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- City Manager Gamble commended Director Smith and Supervisor Ritter.
  - Fantasy Forest 2.0 update
    - Bids will go out before September 12<sup>th</sup> for the playground and general playscape furniture. The results will be presented at the October Commission meeting along with a recommendation of the Fantasy Forest Core Team.
  - Konan City of the Shiga Prefecture of Japan is our Friendship City. There is a delegate of Konan that will be visiting the City on Monday, September 9, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. The Mayor will be present, but all Commissioners are welcome to attend. Please let me know if you will be able to make this auspicious occasion.
  - There has been a marked increase of interest regarding several properties in the City over the past several months.
    - First of which is the former Save-a-Lot facility. There has been a question on whether or not the City would issue an OPRA on personal property if there were to be a significant investment and job re-creation in this facility. I plan to talk more specifically about this next month. Other properties that I have been asked about are:
      - The vacant City owned property adjacent to Old County Farm Road.
      - The vacant parcel South of the condominium development off of Glastonbury specifically related to zoning and master planning.
  - Social District for the City was approved.
    - Discussion regarding when the social district would have their first event.
  - The City was awarded the:
    - Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) has awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to City of St. Johns for its annual comprehensive financial report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2023. The report has been judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards of the program, which includes demonstrating a constructive "spirit of full disclosure" to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the report.
      - The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.
      - Kudos to Kristina Kinde, Deputy City Manager/City Treasurer and many other city employees who contribute towards this final product for which this award was given.
  - Mindy Seavey, our illustrious Clerk, celebrated a momentous anniversary this past August 15<sup>th</sup>. On that date, Mindy celebrated her 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of employment

with the City. We are so very blessed to have the friendliest and most organized clerk on the planet working for our TEAM.

### 3. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Hyzer congratulated Mindy on running a great election, he was in and out with no issues. Congratulations to you and your staff. Congratulations to Kristina on getting the certificate, these are the hardest pages and most time consuming of the audit. Congrats to all that put on the Mint Festival, it was a well-run event. He said he talked to Chief on National Night Out and congrats to April on all she does.

Commissioner Hufnagel said congratulations to our favorite city treasurer, great job. Also, Mindy's 30 years is a long time of service; she is also that institutional knowledge that is so important; amazing in the past where someone has asked her what happened 25 years ago, and she will say I know where that is; real value that can't be overstated and she brings that value to the whole team. He is looking forward to another 30 successful years. He said the National Night Out; it is a great event. He acknowledged the work staff has put into working with business owners. We have a lot of great supportive businesses in this city. Mint Festival was a great festival with wonderful weather. He heard a lot of comments, specifically on the carnival. In the past, there wasn't high praise from people in the community. He heard so many positive comments about that, they did a fantastic job, and the new location benefited that as well, being able to have smaller kids rides segregated.

Director Hanover said they agreed to come back next year.

Commissioner Hufnagel said 11:00 at night on Friday he enjoyed hearing people scream (on the rides). He acknowledged the arts council on another successful concert season, there is one left on Wednesday. There were good groups and nice crowds.

Commissioner Ruestman said ditto to everything and congrats, good job. She mentioned the Pride Festival and said she gave a welcome on behalf of the commission. She said it was a great event, good turnout, warm weather, and people had a lot of fun in a really positive environment. She discussed the car show on main street and kudos to the DDA for enlivening main street. She said it is nice to see all the activity that is going on there. Congratulations to the library for the great job they did getting funding for the facility project, kudos. She said she is glad they have another location to live out of for a while so people can enjoy the library.

Commissioner Gurski echoed everyone's comments. He said the Mint Festival seemed rather active this year, more people than he has seen in years past. He said he doesn't know if it was the weather or more activities. He said he saw the parking lines down

Lansing Street and that was a good problem to have. He gave an update on the ambulance board and said they are making some changes there. As it continues to grow, significantly and quite quickly, they have 42 staff members now; it is a big business, and it needs to run that way. It started as a very small entity with a lot of voluntary help and that is the transition we are in, and it is going to be difficult. We are in the midst of that. We had a special meeting last Friday; more to come; all good things but comes with additional work.

ADJOURNMENT

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

YEA: Hufnagel, Ruestman, Gurski, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:09 p.m.