

CITY OF ST. JOHNS
CITY COMMISSION MINUTES
FEBRUARY 24, 2025

The regular meeting of the St. Johns City Commission was called to order by Mayor Dzurka at 6:04 p.m. at the Clinton County Courthouse, 100 East State Street, 2nd Floor, Suite #2200, St. Johns, Michigan.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Eric Hufnagel, Brad Gurski, Scott Dzurka, Chris Hyzer

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chris DeLiso

STAFF PRESENT: Chad Gamble, City Manager; Kristina Kinde, City Treasurer; Mindy J. Seavey, City Clerk; Justin Smith, Director of Public Services; Anne Seurnynck, City Attorney; Chris Khorey, McKenna

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

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

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

a. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the minutes of the January 27, 2025 special meeting and January 27, 2025 regular meeting be approved as presented.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

b. Receipt of Warrants

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that warrants be approved as presented in the amount of \$1,706,957.01.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

c. Police Department Pace Scheduler Proposal

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission approve the Pace Scheduler Proposal and authorize the mayor to endorse the same to include the initial start-up expense of \$1,600.00.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

AGENDA

Mayor Dzurka asked if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda. He said they were moving up item #5 to item #1 of New Business (Quarterly Budget Presentation); and adding BS&A Payments as item #2 New Business.

Commissioner Gurski asked to add Resolution to Freeze Wages and Commission a Comprehensive Salary Study after approval of Capital Improvement Plan item.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer 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
 - Special meeting minutes of January 27, 2025
 - Regular meeting minutes of January 27, 2025
- b. Receipt of Warrants
 - In the amount of \$1,706,957.01
- c. Police Department Pace Scheduler Proposal
 - Staff recommends that the city commission approve the Pace Scheduler Proposal and authorize the mayor to endorse the same to include the initial start-up expense of \$1,600.00.
4. Approval of Agenda:

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

C. PRESENTATIONS:

1. Badge Pinning Ceremony – Fire Chief Kevin Douglas
2. Master Plan Presentation

D. PERSONS WISHING TO PRESENT TESTIMONY:

1. Public comment - agenda & non-agenda items

E. COMMUNICATIONS:

F. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Resolution #10-2025 – Resolution to Adopt an Ordinance to Amend Title IX: General Regulations, Chapter 93: Nuisances of the City of St. Johns Code of Ordinances Regarding Noise Control
2. Planning Commission Recommendation – Resolution #11-2025 - Adopt an Ordinance to Amend Chapter 155 of the City of St. Johns Code of Ordinances Regarding Landscape Standards
3. Planning Commission Recommendation – Resolution #12-2025 - Adopt an Ordinance to Amend Chapter 155 of the City of St. Johns Code of Ordinances Regarding Accessory Structures
4. Planning Commission Recommendation – Resolution #13-2025 - Resolution to Adopt an Ordinance to Amend Chapter 155 of the City of St. Johns Code of Ordinances Regarding Height Requirements for Corner Lots
5. Planning Commission Recommendation – Resolution #14-2025 - Adopt an Ordinance to Amend Chapter 155 of the City of St. Johns Code of Ordinances Regarding General Exceptions for Corner Lots
6. Planning Commission Recommendation – Resolution #15-2025 - Adopt an Ordinance to Amend Chapter 155 of the City of St. Johns Code of Ordinances Regarding Supplementary Regulations for Keeping Animals

G. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Quarterly Budget Report
2. BS&A Payments
3. Approval of Capital Improvement Plan
4. Resolution to Freeze Wages and Commission a Comprehensive Salary Study
5. Fantasy Forest Playground Installation Vendor Selection & Contract
6. 2025 Street Millage Improvements Bids & Sole Source Designation
7. Compost Site Proposal
8. City Manager Comments
9. Commissioner Comments

H. ADJOURNMENT:

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None
Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PRESENTATIONS

1. Badge Pinning Ceremony – Fire Chief Kevin Douglas

City Manager Gamble discussed the process of hiring a full-time fire chief; the competition for that position; and how lucky we are to have him as our fire chief. He invited Chief Douglas' family and friends up to the front.

Fire Chief Douglas introduced his family and friends present.

The badge pinning ceremony was performed.

PERSONS WISHING TO PRESENT TESTIMONY

1. Public Comment

Mayor Dzurka asked if there were any public comments. He discussed the rules regarding public comment.

There were none.

2. Master Plan Presentation

Chris Khorey, McKenna, was present. He presented progress of the Planning Commission's master plan update. He discussed: Future Land Use; Redevelopment; Housing Capacity; and Mobility and Transportation. He discussed the next steps to the adoption process.

Treasurer Kinde left at 6:34 pm.

COMMUNICATIONS

OLD BUSINESS

1. Resolution #10-2025 – Resolution to Adopt an Ordinance to Amend Title IX: General Regulations, Chapter 93: Nuisances of the City of St. Johns Code of Ordinances Regarding Noise Control

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission adopt Resolution #10-2025.

Attorney Seurnyck discussed the exemption for anything that would go against the Right to Farm Act.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka

NAY: Hyzer

Motion carried.

2. Planning Commission Recommendation – Resolution #11-2025 – Adopt an Ordinance to Amend Chapter 155 of the City of St. Johns Code of Ordinances Regarding Landscape Standards

Chris Khorey, McKenna, was present. He discussed this ordinance is addressing concerns that arose during a development review last summer.

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission adopt Resolution #11-2025.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

3. Planning Commission Recommendation – Resolution #12-2025 - Adopt an Ordinance to Amend Chapter 155 of the City of St. Johns Code of Ordinances Regarding Accessory Structures

Chris Khorey, McKenna, was present. He discussed the next four items all tie together to solve some issues that have come up.

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission adopt Resolution #12-2025.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

4. Planning Commission Recommendation – Resolution #13-2025 - Resolution to Adopt an Ordinance to Amend Chapter 155 of the City of St. Johns Code of Ordinances Regarding Height Requirements for Corner Lots

Chris Khorey, McKenna, was present. He said this addresses the definition section.

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission adopt Resolution #13-2025.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

5. Planning Commission Recommendation – Resolution #14-2025 - Adopt an Ordinance to Amend Chapter 155 of the City of St. Johns Code of Ordinances Regarding General Exceptions for Corner Lots

Chris Khorey, McKenna, was present. He discussed the primary thing is that this clarifies the definition of front lot line and makes it more consistent between lots.

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission adopt Resolution #14-2025.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

6. Planning Commission Recommendation – Resolution #15-2025 - Adopt an Ordinance to Amend Chapter 155 of the City of St. Johns Code of Ordinances Regarding Supplementary Regulations for Keeping Animals

Chris Khorey, McKenna, was present. He discussed patching a hole created by an ordinance that was just adopted, to make sure chicken coops cannot be on either yard fronting a street.

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission adopt Resolution #15-2025.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Quarterly Budget Report

City Manager Gamble discussed the RCA for the quarterly budget report; the first quarter revenues/expenditures represent approximately 50% of the budget, so we're right on track; General Fund Capital Outlay; renovating city offices; it is a big year for city in terms of projects that we have; we still have Wilson Center proceeds we are holding; and there have been a couple of emergency expenditures on the Wilson Center.

Mayor Dzurka said last month we approved the budget adjustments.

Commissioner Hyzer asked for a report on revenue for the General Fund.

Chris Khorey left at 6:57 pm.

2. BS&A Payments

City Manager Gamble said the city currently uses Invoice Cloud for credit card and ACH processing for cash receipting. He discussed: the reconciliation with bank statements is pretty arduous; BS&A is one of our main software programs and they are coming out with this software that integrates with this; we have alerted Invoice Cloud to stop our contract; and the tap to pay chip reader. We are requesting approval of the contract with BS&A.

There was a discussion of the current process.

City Manager Gamble said we will offer a free service fee option for ACH.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission approve the contract with BS&A Payments, effective April 21, 2025, and authorize the City Manager to sign.

YAY: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

3. Approval of Capital Improvement Plan

City Manager Gamble discussed the special joint meeting regarding the CIP (Capital Improvement Plan). He discussed the CIP process; he would view projects presented as having merit with the city commission and planning commission; because of budget timing this is done a little early; and staff would recommend what projects to include in budget and the city commission can pull any projects out that you would like.

The city commission discussed:

- This is a “department suggested” CIP.
- Prioritizing projects.
- Funding for projects.
- CIP that gets approved in the budget should be placed on our website.
- The budget process.

Attorney Seurnyck discussed the ordinance and state statutes regarding CIP’s and said the planning commission should create the plan and prioritize. She discussed the difference between this plan and approved capital improvements.

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission receive the Capital Improvement Plan and place it on file.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

4. Resolution to Adopt to Freeze Wages and Compensatory Wage Study

Commissioner Gurski said it is very important for the city to take a good objective look at salary and compensation. He discussed trying to build a sustainable path forward; the wide variety and impacts related to healthcare and pension liability. He said the last wage and compensatory study was done in 2017. He passed out a proposed resolution.

The city commission discussed:

- Current wage bands.
- A wage study to get positions in alignment.
 - Soliciting bids.
 - Authorizing the expenditure.
 - Timeframe.
- A possible wage freeze (except for Grade 4 and lower; collective bargaining agreement positions; and where people are eligible for step increases).

City Manager Gamble discussed:

- The resolution should be reviewed by the city attorney to ensure legal compliance.
- Following the budget process to understand revenues and implications before freezing salaries.
- The authority of setting wages.
- The wage study should be incorporated into the FY25-26 budget process.
 - The budget is not scheduled to be adopted until May 2025.

- There are no slated salary or wage changes for the next five months.

There was a discussion of:

- More documentation and communication are needed regarding wage bands and scales.
- The wage bands need to be accurately reflected before making any salary adjustments.
- How long a study would take.
- The current process for wage adjustments.

Attorney Seurnynck discussed:

- Needing to review the proposed resolution.
- Concerned that the wages would remain frozen until the salary study is done and how long that would take to complete.
- Wants to make sure there are no unintended legal consequences.
- Having a conversation to understand the concerns and then bringing back an attorney's opinion by the next regular meeting.

There was a discussion of:

- There are no slated salary or wage changes for the rest of this fiscal year.
 - Except for merit bonuses that are brought forward.
- More documentation coming to the commission.
- Analysis of the potential liability on the pension side.
- Staff beginning to look at RFP language, timeframes and approximate cost.
- Healthcare costs.

5. Fantasy Forest Playground Installation Vendor Selection & Contract

City Manager Gamble commended Bill Schafer and Director Smith. He discussed a spreadsheet he passed out. We received two installation bids. Isabella is using a licensed installer by Little Tikes and we recommend awarding this project to Isabella.

There was a discussion of:

- The project requires an additional \$113,000 to cover costs, with a built-in \$38,000 contingency.
 - Total revenue received: \$1.632 million.
 - Total project cost: \$1.75 million.
 - City contributions: \$235,000 plus \$75,000 for the first year.
- The city has authorized the use of supplanted ARPA funds for the project.

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- City contributions total around \$450,000.
 - ARPA funds available: \$600,000.
 - There is potential for additional fundraising and donations to reduce the shortfall.
 - Some donors have discussed restricting their monies toward future phases.
 - Plans for a groundbreaking event to encourage more donations.
 - Installation costs were higher than projected, particularly for security and lighting.
 - Security and lighting costs were higher than projected.
 - Concrete supports for lights were a significant cost.
 - The natural play area could be eliminated to reduce costs.
 - Quotes from local vendors are expected in the next two weeks.
 - The natural play area is estimated to cost \$30,000.
 - The use of ARPA funds should leverage other dollars and not create a deficit in the general fund.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission approve the low bid as submitted by Isabella Corp and confirmed by Wade Trim for the amount of \$769,000 and authorize the Mayor to sign the contract, subject to city attorney review.

There was a discussion of putting the nature play area on hold; and being tied to this project.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission approve the low bid as submitted by Isabella Corp and confirmed by Wade Trim for the amount of \$769,000 and authorize the Mayor to sign the contract, pending legal review.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

6. 2025 Street Millage Improvements Bids & Sole Source Designation

Director Smith discussed the bidding process and said last year we asked for sole sourcing through Michigan Paving & Materials. At that time, the commission requested to put it out to bid for one more year. Michigan Paving is still the low bidder so along with approval of the bid we ask for sole sourcing. We would bring you a contract in March for approval and signature.

Commissioner Hyzer asked about 13A and 5EL mix.

There was a discussion of:

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- Concerns about not fixing the road base could shorten the lifespan of improvements.
 - Using 13A mix is cheaper than 5L, but standards need to be consistent.
 - 13A mix is cheaper than 5L.
 - Current standards require 5L for developers.
 - There was an oversight in our construction standards document, and we will bring that document back for approval in March.
 - Lansing Street.
 - Failure due to road cuts.
 - Sealing done with the Clinton County Road Commission.

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission approve the bid from Mid-Michigan Paving & Materials Co. to complete the 2025 Street Millage improvements and utilize Michigan Paving and Materials as a sole source vendor through FY 28/29 for all non-patch based paving operations/projects.

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

7. Compost Site Proposal

Director Smith discussed the compost site proposal. He said there is a local contractor interested in giving us a proposal to purchase the site to have a commercial compost site. He is looking for direction from the city commission.

There was a discussion of:

- There is potential liability and cost savings in selling the compost site to a commercial operator.
 - Current costs for composting are high and difficult to control.
 - Potential liability due to proximity to waterways.
- The property has historical use as a dump, which may affect its viability for other uses.

There was a discussion by the city commission to get a proposal from the local contractor and an appraisal of property by a commercial realtor.

8. City Manager Comments

City Manager Gamble discussed:

- Update on Bendzinski & Company – Letter Proposal

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- Discussion of a special meeting date for this to be taken up on its own.
 - Next Scheduled Meeting is March 11, 2025, 5:30
 - Fire Allocation Letter – sending out this week.
 - Jessica Harriss v. City of St. Johns Update
 - Fantasy Forest 2.0 update
 - Work with Contractors to schedule pre-con and groundbreaking (targeting April).
 - Wilson Center Update
 - Water Leaking – Emergency roof repairs.
 - Dehumidification and removal of ice accumulation on 2nd and 1st floors.
 - Update on CCLP Response
 - Presentation of New Marketing and Media Coordinator

9. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Gurski discussed the last ambulance board meeting: update to the articles of incorporation and they have the next month or two to review and comment back; one change would be everyone has 1 person on the board (the city currently has 2).

Commissioner Hyzer said in looking at the memo, we are doing a lot of assists with the ambulance which drives up the cost. He said maybe a discussion needs to be had inquiring why.

Commissioner Gurski discussed protocols associated with the response in the medical world and they are supposed to use their discretion. He thinks some of it can be curbed. He said other communities have rescue.

Commissioner Hyzer said with the ordinances we have done (concrete pads to trailers), how many permits have we done? He also suggested follow-up on education on snow removal with the sidewalks.

Commissioner Hufnagel thanked staff for coming to meetings that run until 9 pm.

Mayor Dzurka said he met with Congressman Barrett. He recognized him and his staff for visiting us. There was an opportunity to discuss infrastructure and there was a good conversation about our side of property. His office is open to looking at financial assistance. He recognized the DDA, they had a meeting last week with the Main Street Program under MEDC. They will be looking a bit further at that to become a Main Street Program, there is no cost to this other than joining the national association for \$350 per year. He wanted to make sure all commissioners are getting the Planning Commission,

ZBA and Parks and Recreation minutes. He asked about inserting those into our commission memo.

City Manager Gamble mentioned our new software coming to our website (eNotifications) and he would work with Clerk Seavey to get commissioners signed up.

Mayor Dzurka discussed the Personnel Advisory and Finance Advisory and suggested some semblance of a draft memo that comes from them to the rest of the commission.

ADJOURNMENT

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

YEA: Hufnagel, Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 p.m.