

CITY OF ST. JOHNS

CITY COMMISSION MINUTES

MARCH 24, 2025

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

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Brad Gurski, Scott Dzurka, Chris Hyzer, Chris DeLiso

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Eric Hufnagel

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

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

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

a. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the minutes of the February 24, 2025 special meeting; February 24, 2025 regular meeting; and March 11, 2025 special meeting be approved as presented.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

b. Receipt of Warrants

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that warrants be approved as presented in the amount of \$1,365,908.31.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

c. Water Department Service Truck

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission approve the purchase of the new water department service truck from Young Chevrolet in the amount of \$59,498.00.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

d. Section #307 of the Personnel Handbook – Sick Leave Benefits

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission approve the revision of Section #307 of the Personnel Manual – Sick Leave Benefits.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

e. Updated Engineering & Construction Standards

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission approve the revised Engineering & Construction Standards (change to HMA mix on page 13 as discussed at the 2/24/25 meeting) as presented.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

f. St. Johns Fire Department joining Michigan Mutual Aid Box Alarm System

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission authorize the mayor to sign the Amended Michigan Mutual Aid Box Alarm Association Agreement Effective 03/25/2025 on behalf of the St. Johns Fire Department.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

g. Audit Quotes

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission approve the engagement letter with Maner Costerisan for the next three years

audits with an option to extend the audit for three additional years following the three-year contract without re-bidding and authorize the mayor to sign the engagement letter.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

AGENDA

Mayor Dzurka asked if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda. He added the Introduction of Russell Shellberg under Presentations; and added new item #1 under New Business - Local Governing Body Resolution for Charitable Gaming Licenses (Gateway/Oakview PTO).

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner DeLiso 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 February 24, 2025
 - Regular meeting minutes of February 24, 2025
 - Special meeting minutes of March 11, 2025
- b. Receipt of Warrants
 - In the amount of \$1,365,908.31
- c. Water Department Service Truck
 - Staff recommends that the city commission approve the purchase of the new water department service truck from Young Chevrolet in the amount of \$59,498.00.
- d. Section #307 of the Personnel Handbook – Sick Leave Benefits
 - Staff recommends that the city commission approve the revision of Section #307 of the Personnel Manual – Sick Leave Benefits.
- e. Updated Engineering & Construction Standards
 - Staff recommends that the city commission approve the revised Engineering & Construction Standards (change to HMA mix on page 13 as discussed at the 2/24/25 meeting) as presented.
- f. St. Johns Fire Department joining Michigan Mutual Aid Box Alarm System

-Staff recommends that the city commission approve authorize the mayor to sign the Amended Michigan Mutual Aid Box Alarm Association Agreement Effective 03/25/2025 on behalf of the St. Johns Fire Department.

g. Audit Quotes

-Staff recommends that the city commission approve the engagement letter with Maner Costerisan for the next three years audits with an option to extend the audit for three additional years following the three-year contract without re-bidding and authorize the mayor to sign the engagement letter.

4. Approval of Agenda:

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

C. PRESENTATIONS:

1. Introduction of Russell Shellberg (*Added to agenda*)
2. St. Johns Police Department Policy and Procedures Update
3. Clinton Area Ambulance Authority Update

D. PERSONS WISHING TO PRESENT TESTIMONY:

1. Public comment - agenda & non-agenda items

E. COMMUNICATIONS:

F. OLD BUSINESS:

G. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Local Governing Body Resolution for Charitable Gaming Licenses (Gateway/Oakview PTO) (*Added to agenda*)
2. Senior Citizen Park MDNR Passport Grant Application – Resolution #16-2025
3. Principal Shopping District Special Assessment Renewal – Resolution #17-2025 to Initiate the Principal Shopping District Special Assessment Project
4. Principal Shopping District Special Assessment Renewal – Resolution #18-2025 for Public Hearing of Necessity
5. Personnel Advisory Committee Report & Discussion
6. City Manager Comments
7. Commissioner Comments

H. ADJOURNMENT:

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PRESENTATIONS

1. Introduction of Russell Shellberg

City Manager Gamble discussed adding communication bandwidth to the city; we have been working with King Media; have had multiple discussions with the school district regarding communication. He introduced Russell Shellberg, our new Marketing and Media Coordinator. He discussed his background and said he looks forward to what he will bring to our team.

Russell was present. He said he is a Dewitt native, worked at Fox 47 for 3 years, and attended CMU. He discussed the Fantasy Forest 2.0 project and working with the school on bond issues and trying to put a focus on getting that information out. He said he is excited to fill this role.

City Manager Gamble said we will be bringing back a contract between the school and city at our next meeting.

Mayor Dzurka welcomed Russ.

2. St. Johns Police Department Policy and Procedures Update

Police Chief Kirk presented the policy and procedures update. He discussed looking at policies and procedures when he came here; as we were updating policies, statutes were changing as we were getting legal review; that led them to the Lexipol System for keeping policies up to date, best practices, and according to the law; policy review objectives; policy examples; policy update notifications; policy distribution process; daily training bulletin; everyday training; benefits to the department and city; and additional training resources; the LEIN policy and April's work; and other local jurisdictions started Lexipol after us.

There was a discussion of the Lexipol compliance tool.

City Manager Gamble commended Chief Kirk, Deputy Chief Tobias and April Lech on their efforts.

Mayor Dzurka thanked them.

3. Clinton Area Ambulance Authority Update

Commissioner Gurski discussed the major work that is going on: managing growth; definite need for the service in the community; very hard to do on a for-profit basis; trying to maintain 3 rigs on the road at a time; serving a good portion of the county now; hurdles of the articles of incorporation; and Lynn has done a great job bringing his team along.

Lynn Weber, Director of Clinton Area Ambulance Authority, was present. He discussed: 47 employees on staff (1/3 full time; 1/3 female; 50/50 EMT's); couldn't afford for all to be fulltime; number of responses last year; challenge: Medicare and Medicaid are less than it takes us to make a call; rates have doubled in the last 3 years; a lot of our costs have doubled; funding from member agencies are reason why we are still here; cost per call is \$200 more than what we collect per call; primary response for 50% of the county (north half); biggest issue right now is turnaround time; great team; hope to be starting our community paramedic system soon; there is a grant for the program and we are pursuing other grants; overall we are doing really well; and we have a great team.

There was a discussion of:

- Response time.
- Mental health help (not in initial community paramedic program).

Mayor Dzurka thanked Lynn for the update. He said it is important to emphasize rates of Medicare and Medicaid to members of Congress. He thanked Lynn and his team and also thanked Ed Thelen, board member.

PERSONS WISHING TO PRESENT TESTIMONY

1. Public Comment

Mayor Dzurka asked if there were any public comments. He discussed the rules regarding public comment. He addressed the emails regarding the feeding ban. He discussed briefly how we got to this feeding ban: planning commission, wildlife eating at some of the feeding places, and colonies of feral cats. He asked Chad where we are at and how it is being enforced.

City Manager Gamble discussed: the ordinance; decision to maintain the ban on feeding; ban on open feeding is maintained, but if trapping that is acceptable to the city.

There was a discussion of the TNR Program (Trap, Neuter, Release); no code enforcement if it follows that protocol.

Holly Thoms, Capital Area Humane Society, was present to address the feeding ban. She discussed the current ordinance; information that was presented to the commission last year; hasn't received constructive criticism on what she sent; why managed feeding does work; how TNR works; what happens when you don't feed cats; and she urged the commission to take some action and update the ordinance.

Officer Wright, Clinton County Animal Control, was present. She commented on the relationship with Holly and the TNR program; she supports structured feeding and feeding bans aren't effective.

Amanda Walter, homeowner, was present. She discussed: her neighbor does mass feeding; worked with non-profit and they have been tremendous, and she has seen a huge improvement; concerned about reintroduction of new cats and kittens coming in; massive cat issue in neighborhood; can't have plants; ask that we don't completely take it out.

Doug Walter, Meadowview Drive, was present. He discussed: he can't leave his garage door open; has a handicap son; they are in the yard a lot; mess from cats can be tracked into the house on wheels of wheelchair; he doesn't want stray cats in his yard; 5 kittens were delivered in his window well; and they don't need it in the neighborhood.

David Walter, Meadowview, was present. He discussed: he moved into the home 3 years ago and has been dealing with the issue ever since; happy to work with the non-profit; adopted a cat; the individual isn't taking care of the animals outside of feeding; the health aspect of multiple kittens; have 3 cats on their roof and 4 in yard; their kids are in the yard; feces; not being able to enjoy their own property; and they have killed their bushes. He is asking the commission to please consider all of the facts.

Patience Cole, Director of Happy Feet Pet Rescue, was present. She said she has been involved in the Meadowview Drive issue. She discussed: she doesn't disagree, it is tough; Holly has free ultrasonic deterrence; we have heard a lot of testimony how the cat population has gone down; they have returned some; that homeowner is not responsible for the cat population; it is not going to happen overnight; some cats belong to people in the neighborhood and were free roaming; and TNR is the best approach to take, but it is a slow process sometimes.

Chelsea, not a resident, was present. She discussed: she became involved with foster kittens; fosters 20 kittens per year; the entire state and country has a problem with cats and the problem is owners of cats; we are fighting an uphill battle we can never win; the only way is to spay and neuter; we don't have state laws preventing free roam; and discussed managed feeding.

Ed Thelen, 110 W. Cass, was present. He asked for your support for the grant application that Director Schafer will be presenting.

Christine Schweigert, resident from Meadowview Drive, was present. She discussed: her kids get attacked by cats; they had to replace window screens; lost plants and crops; the studies that cats will migrate for mating and food and will move on if you remove the resources; add laws for not allowing free roaming; cats bring in lots of disease; the lady was feeding throughout her yard; cats don't have many predators; and their health and disease is a problem and to our ecosystem.

Amy Grasso, was present. She discussed: you can't license cats; she has been involved with CAHS (Capital Area Humane Society) for 15 years; and we are hearing people say they are seeing the population go down; give us time, it is going to work.

Mayor Dzurka thanked everyone for coming and said we will continue to look into this issue.

COMMUNICATIONS

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

1. Local Governing Body Resolution for Charitable Gaming Licenses (Gateway/Oakview PTO)

A member of the PTO was present. She said they are hosting a fundraiser this spring and have to apply to the State to hold a raffle.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission adopt the Local Governing Body Resolution for Charitable Gaming Licenses for the Gateway/Oakview PTO.

YAY: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

2. Senior Citizen Park MDNR Passport Grant Application – Resolution #16-2025

Parks and Recreation Director Bill Schafer discussed the master planning process for all of our city parks; they came up with a master plan for the Senior Citizen Park; it is an

underutilized park; it should score better on the passport grant; we can only apply for \$150,000; and we are hoping the additional amount would be split over two fiscal years.

There was a discussion of:

- The grant.
- The CIP (Capital Improvement Plan).
- The project.
- The agreement with Wade Trim that was approved at our last meeting (special meeting).

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner DeLiso that the city commission adopt Resolution #16-2025 Authorizing Submittal of a Michigan Department of Natural Resources Passport Grant Application to Fund the 2025 Senior Citizen Park Improvements.

YAY: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

3. Principal Shopping District Special Assessment Renewal – Resolution #17-2025 to Initiate the Principal Shopping District Special Assessment Project

Treasurer Kinde discussed we have done this special assessment in the past; renewal; it is a 6-step process; it is a supplement for the PSD (Principal Shopping District); the first step is the initiatory resolution and then the public hearing of necessity.

Mayor Dzurka said the PSD was supportive of this.

There was a discussion of:

- Number of parcels.
- \$10 increase per year.

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission adopt Resolution #17-2025 to Initiate the Principal Shopping District Special Assessment Project.

YAY: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

4. Principal Shopping District Special Assessment Renewal – Resolution #18-2025 for Public Hearing of Necessity

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner DeLiso that the city commission adopt Resolution #18-2025 a Resolution to Hold a Public Hearing of Necessity on the Renewal of the Principal Shopping District Special Assessment.

There was a discussion of the notification process.

YAY: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

5. Personnel Advisory Committee Report & Discussion

Mayor Dzurka said he and Vice Mayor Gurski met with Chad and Kristina in regard to salaries and wages. He thanked Anne for looking at our Charter and clarified our role as the commission. We need to work on policies and procedures on how we work on that for the commission when we move salaries.

Commissioner Gurski said the meeting with staff and Anne cleared everything up. We need to adopt a policy that makes sense.

Mayor Dzurka said he and Commissioner Hufnagel met as the Personnel Advisory Committee. They talked about suggestions they would like to bring forward to this body regarding a salary and wage study; terms of anticipated increase of overall healthcare expenditures and talk about what we are going to see.

City Manager Gamble said he appreciated the meetings and discussions regarding this very important topic. He discussed: impacts regarding increases in healthcare costs (best guess right now is a 44% increase); there is a cost component shared by employees; concern expressed by a few commissioners with regards to increases implemented last year; the graph he passed out; a wage study in the next fiscal year; he recommends a 3.5% rate increase across the board and it would help employees address increased healthcare costs.

Treasurer Kinde discussed our current insurance is no longer going to be offered (PHP/U of M Health); forced us into finding another plan; our current plan type is not offered (HSA/HRA); cost increase of closest plan with a similar benefit; union contracts; and we are trying to pick a plan closest to what we offer now to employees.

There was a discussion of:

- Options and whether we could offer different plans.
- 10 of our employees opt-out of our insurance.
- HSA & HRA.

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- Contributions.
 - Plan designs.
 - Total cost of increase.
 - Managing costs.
 - In our final year of the union contracts.
 - Our broker, Gallagher, and the insurance pool that we could take a look at for January (we can't join in July, has to be done on a calendar year basis).
 - Union contracts and what their annual wage increases were.

Mayor Dzurka discussed healthcare cost and employee out-of-pocket expenses; we are going to work on a wage study and it would probably take 6 months; he suggested for July 1 a 3% COLA, with no changes to salary ranges or bands; and for department heads and above do a 1.5% COLA to acknowledge their increase in healthcare.

Treasurer Kinde asked for a clarification about department heads.

Mayor Dzurka said level 10 and above on the wage scale would be the 1.5% COLA. He said if we need to make adjustments at the time of the wage study we can.

There was a discussion of:

- The wage study process.
- Put the cost in the 25/26 budget.
- Pension liability.
- Lansing Street.
- Saving for other future expenses.

City Manager Gamble said he understands the concerns over the salary increases; lacking the updated wage study, only a few employees are above the 80th percentile; to separate certain employees without justification is difficult; the ranges are inflated by COLA's from the 2017/18 wage study; and those employees (level 10 and above) are salary, not hourly.

Commissioner Hyzer asked about RFP's for a wage study.

City Manager Gamble said we will have the RFP ready for the June meeting of the commission.

Motion by Commissioner DeLiso seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission direct staff to build the budget based on a 3% increase for employees; with the exception of those level 10 and above at 1.5%.

There was a discussion of what those 4 employees would cost us at a 3% COLA.

YAY: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

6. City Manager Comments

City Manager Gamble discussed:

- Passed around information on Trap, Neuter, Release program.
- Update on Status of Urban Cooperative Agreement Between Bingham Township and City of St. Johns.
- SEPA Form Updates – Cognito form creation by SuAnn Prince – recognition.
- No Updates on Feiger V. City of St. Johns Lawsuit - discovery.
- Fantasy Forest 2.0 update
 - April 15, 2025, 11:00 a.m. Groundbreaking Ceremony – updates to follow.
- Wilson Center Update
 - Emergency Repairs to roof Complete – design finalized.
 - Dehumidification/mold removal on 2nd and 1st floors to begin soon.
 - City Construction Bidding of Unit #1, Common Space and City Office Improvements to commence in April/May.
- Park Facility Survey – Invaluable information used for upcoming P & R Master Plan Update.
- Recognition of Chief Kirk serving as use of force SME for Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement.
- Summary of Code Inspections and outstanding issues – proactively working to address concerns before they become blight.

7. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Hyzer said he appreciated the updates. He said he would appreciate receiving them electronically. He enjoyed the presentation from the ambulance tonight. He said they are an underappreciated service.

Commissioner DeLiso said he appreciated the lively debate.

Mayor Dzurka said he sent a brief survey from Eric and himself as we look to renew a contract with Chad. He asked for feedback in the next couple of weeks. He said there was a lot of information about open feeding and trap, neuter and return. He said the Planning Commission has addressed this, but if there are any suggestions, please let Eric, Chad or I know. He said he appreciated all the input this evening from both sides. He

said he received a call today from County Chairperson Bruce DeLong. He is an advocate for doing something at Scott Road and M-21. He wants speed reductions. He said MDOT has turned this down. He discussed a traffic study. He did mention there may have been some conversations and expressing interest in a roundabout in the past.

Director Smith said MDOT denied that. He said there was criticism due to the number of trucks, maintenance, and the hazard. He said now we have the addition of the cheese plant traffic. We have looked at some narrowing like they have in Dewitt. He discussed some designs that were done.

City Manager Gamble MDOT's 5-year plan, planning and conceptual designs.

ADJOURNMENT

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

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.