

CITY OF ST. JOHNS

CITY COMMISSION MINUTES

AUGUST 10, 2020

The regular meeting of the St. Johns City Commission was called to order by Mayor Hufnagel at 6:00 p.m. through a virtual meeting at www.gotomeeting.com.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Heather Hanover, Eric Hufnagel, Bob Craig, Jean Ruestman, Tamara Kirschenbauer

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Jon Stoppels, City Manager; Mindy J. Seavey, City Clerk; Dave Kudwa, Community Development Director; Kristina Kinde, Treasurer, Steve Martin, Director of Public Services; John B. Salemi, City Attorney; David Kirk, Police Chief

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

Commissioner Craig asked that item h. Summer Property Tax Payment Deferral be moved to New Business (item #1).

Motion by Commissioner Hanover seconded by Commissioner Ruestman that the consent agenda be approved as amended.

Clerk Seavey called a roll call vote:

YEA: Craig

YEA: Hanover

YEA: Kirschenbauer

YEA: Ruestman

YEA: Hufnagel

NAY: None

Motion carried.

a. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Hanover seconded by Commissioner Ruestman that the minutes of the July 27, 2020 regular meeting be approved as presented.

YEA: Hanover, Hufnagel, Craig, Ruestman, Kirschenbauer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

b. Approval of Warrants

Motion by Commissioner Hanover seconded by Commissioner Ruestman that warrants be approved as presented in the amount of \$583,757.93.

YEA: Hanover, Hufnagel, Craig, Ruestman, Kirschenbauer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

c. MML Designation of Voting Delegate for the Convention

Motion by Commissioner Hanover seconded by Commissioner Ruestman that the city commission appoint Mayor Eric Hufnagel the voting delegate and Vice Mayor Craig as the alternate for the Michigan Municipal League Convention (online virtual conference) on September 29 – October 2, 2020.

YEA: Hanover, Hufnagel, Craig, Ruestman, Kirschenbauer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

d. Scott Road Improvement – Watermain Extension

Motion by Commissioner Hanover seconded by Commissioner Ruestman that the city commission award this project to Miller Brothers Excavating for a contract price of \$10,500.00.

YEA: Hanover, Hufnagel, Craig, Ruestman, Kirschenbauer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

e. Bike Sculpture Placement

Motion by Commissioner Hanover seconded by Commissioner Ruestman that the city commission accept the recommendation of the property review committee and approve placing the proposed bike sculpture at the depot parking lot entrance.

YEA: Hanover, Hufnagel, Craig, Ruestman, Kirschenbauer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

f. C2AE Contract Amendment for Scott Road

Motion by Commissioner Hanover seconded by Commissioner Ruestman that the city commission accept the C2AE proposal and authorize the mayor and clerk to sign the \$141,250.00 contract amendment.

YEA: Hanover, Hufnagel, Craig, Ruestman, Kirschenbauer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

g. Policy Regarding Unpaid Utility Bills During State or Federal Mandate to Maintain Access to Clean Water for All Residents – Policy #2-2020

Motion by Commissioner Hanover seconded by Commissioner Ruestman that the city commission adopt Policy Regarding Unpaid Utility Bills During State or Federal Mandate to Maintain Access to Clean Water for All Residents.

YEA: Hanover, Hufnagel, Craig, Ruestman, Kirschenbauer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

i. LDFA (Local Development Finance Authority) Appointment

Motion by Commissioner Hanover seconded by Commissioner Ruestman that the city commission appoint Dave North, MWC (Glanbia), to the vacancy on the LDFA Board with his term expiring November 2021.

YEA: Hanover, Hufnagel, Craig, Ruestman, Kirschenbauer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

AGENDA

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

Treasurer Kinde asked to add Water Assistance Program as New Business (item #2).

Motion by Commissioner Craig seconded by Commissioner Kirschenbauer 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 or person attending 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 July 27, 2020
- b. Approval of Warrants
 - In the amount of \$583,757.93
 - c. MML Designation of Voting Delegate for the Convention
 - Staff recommends the city commission appoint Mayor Eric Hufnagel the voting delegate and Vice Mayor Craig as the alternate for the Michigan Municipal League Convention (online virtual conference) on September 29 – October 2, 2020.
 - d. Scott Road Improvement – Watermain Extension
 - Staff recommends the city commission award this project to Miller Brothers Excavating for a contract price of \$10,500.00.
 - e. Bike Sculpture Placement
 - Staff recommends the city commission accept the recommendation of the property review committee and approve placing the proposed bike sculpture at the depot parking lot entrance.
 - f. C2AE Contract Amendment for Scott Road
 - Staff recommends the city commission accept the C2AE proposal and authorize the mayor and clerk to sign the \$141,250.00 contract amendment.
 - g. Policy Regarding Unpaid Utility Bills During State or Federal Mandate to Maintain Access to Clean Water for All Residents – Policy #2-2020
 - Staff recommends the city commission adopt Policy Regarding Unpaid Utility Bills During State or Federal Mandate to Maintain Access to Clean Water for All Residents.
 - ~~h. Summer Property Tax Payment Deferral~~
 - ~~-Staff recommends the city commission authorize staff to post the deferral form to the city website and post the link to the city Facebook page to meet this requirement for the current year; also, in future years include information on the reverse side of tax bills relating to the deferral option.~~
 - i. LDFA (Local Development Finance Authority) Appointment
 - Staff recommends the city commission appoint Dave North, MWC (Glanbia), to the vacancy on the LDFA Board with his term expiring November 2021. (no enclosure)
4. Approval of Agenda:

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**C. PERSONS WISHING TO PRESENT TESTIMONY:**

1. Brenda Terpening – Clinton County Chamber of Commerce
2. Bryan Purves – Downtown Development Authority
3. Public comment (Agenda & Non-agenda items)

D. COMMUNICATIONS:**E. OLD BUSINESS:**

1. COVID 19 Response
2. Review Proposed Purchase Agreement – Acquisition of Vacant Land on W. Gibbs Street

F. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Summer Property Tax Payment Deferral
2. Water Assistance Program
3. Commissioner Comments

G. ADJOURNMENT:

Clerk Seavey called a roll call vote:

YEA: Craig

YEA: Hanover

YEA: Kirschenbauer

YEA: Ruestman

YEA: Hufnagel

NAY: None

Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS**PERSONS WISHING TO PRESENT TESTIMONY****1. Brenda Terpening – Clinton County Chamber of Commerce**

Brenda Terpening was present. She said she is getting lots of calls and e-mails from businesses and the general public: questions regarding 10 people inside; calls about local businesses not doing the social distancing. She said she tries to send an e-mail or phone call when she gets calls like that. She said the biggest is that a lot of businesses are struggling to get employees back. She said fast food restaurants are only doing the drive thru now due to extra work to keep the inside open. She said a lot of non-profits are closed until the end of the year. She said Mahle is back to the three shifts; which is good news. Howe's Greenhouse had a fire and loss at their business. She said a lot of businesses are hiring, but trying to get people who want to work.

Mayor Hufnagel asked if calls are from members or others?

Ms. Terpening said calls from the public. She said calls about restaurants that are open. With all the violence, a lot of people were upset that Wal-Mart is putting a small young lady out there to tell people they have to put masks on.

Mayor Hufnagel asked about tools she is finding for businesses.

Ms. Terpening said PPE hasn't been really easy to get. A few weeks ago, new grants were available to businesses, but they won't distribute the money until the end of September.

City Manager Stoppels said he has been able to be in contact with Brenda over the last couple of months and he appreciated that.

Commissioner Ruestman asked for an update on the Mint Festival and what you are doing.

Ms. Terpening said the Mint Festival is the largest event of the chamber. They are really struggling right now. She said they got a lot of vendor & sponsor fees in before this and they took a little bit of a hit. A lot of vendors are very understanding. They had some sponsors that requested their money back. She said she heard there are going to be a lot of garage sales that weekend, but they are not publicizing because they are afraid they will get shut down.

Mayor Hufnagel thanked Brenda for participating in the meeting.

2. Bryan Purves – Downtown Development Authority

Bryan Purves was not present.

Ms. Terpening said at the meeting last week he said he would be out of town.

3. Public Comment

Madelyn Slamka, from St. Johns, was present. She thanked the city for the attention you are paying to Coronavirus. She asked for the city's response to racial issues and how we are working to make the city safe and pleasant for more than just the residents. What is the commission doing?

Mayor Hufnagel said this section is typically for sharing your comments.

City Manager Stoppels said he would welcome a call at the office to discuss her ideas and would appreciate the opportunity to speak with her.

Mayor Hufnagel thanked her for bringing the issue up and said it is good to have dialog. He asked her to follow-up with Mr. Stoppels either by phone or written communication.

Treasurer Kinde said she heard from Bryan Purves. He had an issue come up.

COMMUNICATIONS

OLD BUSINESS

1. COVID 19 Response

City Manager Stoppels said today's total was 557 in Michigan; that was a low number. Three and a half weeks ago we got concerned about a surge. Nationwide the numbers are also decreasing. The worldwide count will hit 20 million today; US has 5 million cases. Michigan will most likely hit 100,000 cases; we are 18th or 19th in the nation. Over the next few months, it will be affected by opening of the schools. Our superintendent is working day and night on this. Folks in town mostly adhere to the rules on social distancing and masks. There has been some criticism on what we have had to cancel. City employees have been working full time for a few weeks now after being on furlough. Staff members are still using safe practices and we have had no one come down with the virus. He said he is proud of everybody here and the attitude they take. Thanks to staff and city commission.

2. Review Proposed Purchase Agreement – Acquisition of Vacant Land on W. Gibbs Street

There was a discussion of moving this item after commissioner comments.

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Hanover to amend the agenda to go to closed session after commissioner comments to discuss the purchase agreement.

Clerk Seavey called a roll call vote:

YEA: Craig

YEA: Hanover

YEA: Kirschenbauer

YEA: Ruestman

YEA: Hufnagel

NAY: None

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Summer Property Tax Payment Deferral

City Manager Stoppels said city has always had the opportunity to offer to citizens opportunity to defer their summer tax payments. He discussed COVID. He said the old laws require us to publish a notice in the newspaper. We are finding that social media is a better way to make people aware.

Treasurer Kinde said this just came to our attention that this was a requirement. The application can be filled out until September 14th and our due date is August 14th. If filled out, we would go back and remove the penalty. Staff recommends posting on our website, Facebook, and a notice in the local paper.

Motion by Commissioner Craig seconded by Commissioner Ruestman that the city commission approve the proposed plan that city manager and treasurer came up with.

Clerk Seavey called a roll call vote:

YEA: Craig

YEA: Hanover

YEA: Kirschenbauer

YEA: Ruestman

YEA: Hufnagel

NAY: None

Motion carried.

2. Water Assistance Program

Treasurer Kinde said there was a memo sent out last week regarding a water assistance program from the state. They have available \$25 million for water utility assistance. Currently, no shut-off's are allowed with water bills. Some bills are accumulating over a couple of quarters. If people are on the food assistance program, they would qualify. She discussed the 25% credit after the State of Emergency through December 1, 2020. She discussed the process for reimbursement. We would have to opt-in by August 21st.

Mayor Hufnagel asked if there is any downside to this program.

Treasurer Kinde said it will definitely take up staff time, but we can request up to 4% in an administrative charge. She said she is concerned in how we will get the data out there. She was able to get ahold of someone from MDHHS to discuss this.

Mayor Hufnagel asked about the amount of accounts in arrearages.

Treasurer Kinde said we usually pay attention to renters due to not being able to turn over to taxes for collection. There are 25-30 accounts.

Commissioner Craig asked if information is going to be provided by the city?

Treasurer Kinde said the process doesn't involve the residents applying. She said her fear of advertising this is we don't know how quickly the \$25 million is going to go. She said the best approach is to inform the residents once they have been matched up in the DHHS program.

There was a discussion of the program.

Motion by Commissioner Hanover seconded by Commissioner Kirschenbauer that the city commission opt-in to the water assistance program.

Clerk Seavey called a roll call vote:

YEA: Craig

YEA: Hanover

YEA: Kirschenbauer

YEA: Ruestman

YEA: Hufnagel

NAY: None

Motion carried.

3. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Craig said he knows these are trying times. The city is doing all that it can to try and assist people like more signage is going out encouraging people to social distance and asking people to mask up. He said he appreciates what Jon is doing with his daily reports and these assistances. He said he is pleased with all the actions we are doing.

Commissioner Hanover said she got an e-mail from Ken Harris regarding comments on the changes in the crosswalks that we are taking away bricks and putting in asphalt. A couple of people had positive comments. She asked if we decided to take those away because the snow plows had trouble and did we tell people downtown.

Director Kudwa said we have been working with the DDA for last couple of years on this and it has been on our capital improvement plan. He said the composite material is nice when first built, but concrete saddle and bricks in the middle is not great in the middle of the roadway. They were falling apart. He said we did get some comments back. We don't have any intentions of taking any more out this year. We took out one at Railroad Street that was in such poor condition. We have been talking about putting in murals in those areas.

City Manager Stoppels said he and Dave wrote a report on this today regarding painted crosswalks in Old Towne. In a few years, we plan to redo all of the crosswalks. Those became dangerous.

Commissioner Ruestman thanked Maddie for coming and sticking with the whole meeting. She thanked her for bringing up the topic. She said she had brought it up before and she would be happy to be involved in that. She commended the businesses and chamber for making a tough decision for cancelling the Mint Festival; it was the right thing to do. She is concerned about the schools. She heard an additional 5 teachers in the middle school quit or retired yesterday. The teachers are concerned about going back. She said if there is anything we can do to support schools and children.

Commissioner Kirschenbauer said there have been good things that have come out of this: the process of getting into the hospital has gotten better. They are more conscious of people's times and exposure. She said parents are much more involved with kids and schooling. She said with the SOS office, she dealt with them extensively this last week. She said there is a way to get an appointment: call between 8 & 10 and 3 & 5 in the day. Your ability to get an appointment in the next day is greatly increased. She said to be open to going to another city for that appointment.

4. Review Proposed Purchase Agreement – Acquisition of Vacant Land on W. Gibbs Street

Motion by Commissioner Ruestman seconded by Commissioner Hanover that the city commission go into closed session to discuss the purchase agreement.

Clerk Seavey called a roll call vote:

YEA: Craig

YEA: Hanover

YEA: Kirschenbauer

YEA: Ruestman

YEA: Hufnagel

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The meeting went into closed session at 6:54 p.m.

Motion by Commissioner Craig seconded by Commissioner Hanover that the city commission go into open session.

Clerk Seavey called a roll call vote:

YEA: Craig
YEA: Hanover
YEA: Kirschenbauer
YEA: Ruestman
YEA: Hufnagel
NAY: None
Motion carried.

The meeting went into open session at 7:25 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Clerk Seavey called a roll call vote:

YEA: Craig
YEA: Hanover
YEA: Kirschenbauer
YEA: Ruestman
YEA: Hufnagel
NAY: None
Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.