

**CITY OF ROCK ISLAND
CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

City Hall
1528 Third Avenue, Rock Island IL
City Council Chambers, 3rd Floor

2/8/2021 - Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Thoms called the meeting to order at 6:46 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

2. This meeting will be conducted by audio and video conference without a physically present quorum of the Rock Island City Council due to the disaster declaration issued by Governor Pritzker

3. Roll Call

Mayor Thoms asked Interim City Clerk Linda Mohr to call the roll.

Present: Mayor Mike Thoms, Alderman Mark Poulos.

Alderman Ivory D. Clark, Alderman Randy Hurt, Alderman James Spurgetis, Alderwoman Jenni Swanson, Alderman Dylan Parker, and Alderman Dave Geenen were present via remote connection in accordance with Governor Pritzker's Executive Order.

Absent: None.

Staff: City Manager Randy Tweet, Interim City Clerk Linda Mohr, and other City staff.

4. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Thoms led in the saying of the Pledge of Allegiance.

5. Moment of Silence

Mayor Thoms requested a moment of silence. A moment of silence was observed.

6. Minutes of the January 25, 2021 meeting.

MOTION:

Alderman Poulos moved to approve the minutes as printed; Alderman Spurgetis seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

7. Minutes from the August 24th, December 14th, December 21st, 2020, January 11 and January 25th, 2021 Executive Sessions.

MOTION:

Alderman Geenen moved to approve the Executive Session minutes; Alderwoman Swanson seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

8. Public Comment

Mayor Thoms asked if anyone in the public wished to speak via remote connection. No residents volunteered to speak.

9. Update Rock Island by Mayor Thoms

The City of Rock Island is hiring – There are several job openings for various positions within the City. All job postings and job descriptions are available by clicking the Employment tab on the City's website at rigov.org. Select the 'Job Search & Online Application' link to find opportunities to join the Finance, Fire, and Public Works Departments.

It's also not too early to start thinking about that summer job! If you are available between May and November, Highland Springs and Saukie Golf Courses, along with White Water Junction have several seasonal positions that just opened for the 2021 season.

Tax preparation assistance - The Martin Luther King Center is a site for United Way's VITA program, which offers free tax preparation assistance for Quad Citizens with a household income of \$57,000 or less. Hours are 5-8 pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, and 9 am to noon on Saturdays. This year, appointments are required at ALL locations, including the Martin Luther King Center. Schedule your appointment by calling 563-355-9900 or dialing 2-1-1.

Remote Learning Care - The Martin Luther King Center offers Remote Learning Care for K-6 students in the Rock Island/Milan School District. This includes supervised schoolwork until 2:30 p.m., and then after-care until 5:00 p.m. There are currently a limited number of openings for 3rd and 4th graders. Call (309) 732 2999 for more information.

10. Claims

- a. Report from the Human Resources Department regarding payment in the amount of \$8,898.32 to David Morrison, Rock Island, IL for legal services rendered from January 1st through January 31st, 2021.

- b. Report from the Information Technology Department regarding payment in the amount of \$19,724.88 to the Rock Island County Sheriff's Office for the City's share of the RMS Software annual maintenance.
- c. Report from the Information Technology Department regarding payment in the amount of \$50,194.44 to Harris Computer Systems for the Harris Northstar utility billing system maintenance renewal for the period of April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022.
- d. Report from the Public Works Department regarding payment in the amount of \$10,440.29 to McClintock Trucking & Excavating, Silvis, IL, for the Water Service Repair Program, Project 2526, for services provided at 1630 14th Street and 1641 14th Street.
- e. Report from the Public Works Department regarding payment in the amount of \$42,283.01 to McClintock Trucking & Excavating, Inc., Silvis, IL for the Sewer Lateral Repair Program, Project 2564, for services provided at 1807 31st Street, 3704 15th Street, 2601 21st Avenue, 1527 37th Street, and 2313 44th Street.

MOTION:

Alderman Poulos moved to approve Claims items A through E; Alderman Geenen seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

- f. Report from the Public Works Department regarding payment in the amount of \$393,763.83 to Civil Constructors, Inc. East Moline, IL for payment #35 for the Water Filtration Facility, Project 2760, for services provided October 25th through November 26, 2020.

MOTION:

Alderwoman Swanson moved to approve Claims item F; Alderman Hurt seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 6-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Alderman Parker recused himself from the vote due to the nature of his employment.

- 11. Claims for the week of January 22nd through January 28th, 2021 in the amount of \$1,433,325.91; January 29th through February 04, 2021 in the amount of \$308,059.34; and payroll for the weeks of January 11th through January 24th, 2021 in the amount of \$1,536,338.09.

MOTION:

Alderman Parker moved to approve the claims and payroll; Alderman Clark seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

12. Report from the General Administration Department regarding a proposed settlement agreement with Casandra Cleveland.

MOTION:

Alderman Spurgetis moved to approve the settlement agreement as recommended and authorize the City Manager to execute the agreement; Alderman Parker seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 6-1-0 roll call vote. Aye: Poulos, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: Geenen. Absent: None.

13. Report from the Community and Economic Development Department regarding a proposed development agreement with LRC Developers for a new construction project at the Quad City Industrial Center property.

MOTION:

Alderman Poulos moved to approve the resolution as recommended and authorize the City Staff to draft a development agreement; Alderman Parker seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

14. Report from the Community and Economic Development Department regarding the sale of City owned real estate described as 1714 9th Avenue, Parcel 096807, Pin 0735442002, to Heart of Hope Ministries for \$1,101.00 plus closing costs. (First Reading)

MOTION:

Alderman Clark moved to approve the sale as recommended, authorize the City Manager to execute the sale agreement, and consider the ordinance; Alderman Poulos seconded.

Alderman Geenen said he thinks this is a wonderful endeavor for Heart of Hope. Alderman Parker asked if he was allowed to amend the motion and ignore the rules. Mayor Thoms and Mr. Tweet said the second to the first motion would need to be withdrawn and then restated to do so.

Alderman Poulos withdrew his second to the original motion; Alderman Clark made a new motion to approve the sale, authorize the City Manager to execute the sale agreement and to suspend the rules and pass the Ordinance; Alderman Poulos seconded.

Alderman Geenen said he believed everyone is in agreement that Heart of Hope is a good project, and the motion to suspend the rules is in order to expedite the process to get them the keys sooner. He stated support for that.

Alderman Geenen said he spoke with Pastor Linda Sergeant regarding the agenda item, and she expressed excitement to get this project going. She told him that they expected to take possession in March, but he stated if the rules on this measure are suspended, Heart of Hope may be able to get the keys two weeks earlier. Mr. Tweet confirmed that was the case.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Hurt, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

15. Report from the Community and Economic Development Department regarding a request to vacate a section of alley right-of-way between 9th and 10th Streets, south of 4th Avenue. (First Reading)

MOTION:

Alderman Parker moved to approve the vacation and its conveyance to Ms. Gonzalez as recommended; that a utilities easement be put into place for same; and consider the Ordinance; Alderman Clark seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 6-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Alderman Hurt was unable to vote due to a dropped connection.

16. Report from the Public Works Department regarding the Motor Fuel Resolution forms for the Blackhawk Hills and River Heights Reconstruction.

MOTION:

Alderman Spurgetis moved to approve the Resolution for Improvement under the Illinois Highway Code and the Request for Expenditure/Authorization of Motor Fuel Tax Funds as recommended and authorize the City Manager to execute the documents; Alderwoman Swanson seconded.

Alderwoman Swanson said she was glad to see this moving forward, as the roads in question are not in good condition.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 6-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Alderman Hurt was unable to vote due to a dropped connection.

17. Report from the Finance Department regarding an adjustment to the Parks and Recreation Fund budget for CY 2021, increasing revenues by \$275,000.00 and expenses by \$141,011.54.

MOTION:

Alderman Poulos moved to approve the budget adjustments as recommended; Alderman Geenen seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 6-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Alderman Hurt was unable to vote due to a dropped connection.

18. Report from the Finance Department regarding an adjustment to the CY 2021 budget, increasing the Public Works/Fleet Services budget by \$9,116.72.00.

MOTION:

Alderman Parker moved to approve the budget adjustment as recommended; Alderman Poulos seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 6-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Alderman Hurt was unable to vote due to a dropped connection.

19. Report from the Traffic and Engineering Committee regarding a request from the Fire Department to ban parking on the east and west sides of 33rd Street 50 feet north and 50 feet south of 17th Avenue.

MOTION:

Alderman Clark moved to approve the the request as recommended and consider the Ordinance; Alderman Spurgetis seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 6-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Alderman Hurt was unable to vote due to a dropped connection.

20. Other Business

Mayor Thoms provided an update on the downtown task force. He said there are important things happening. He said one of the initial questions regarding the task force was to come up with the form of the downtown, or if there should be a downtown manager, and whether or not it should be a City employee or third-party contract, as well as how to pay for it. He said the committee learned a lot from individuals in similar positions within the Quad Cities area, and will take the data back for analysis. He said a contract was drafted to present to the City Manager and legal staff regarding a job description for a manager. He said all Council members have seen and approved the contract in question with the Chamber of Commerce to hire a manager.

Mayor Thoms said the major issue at the forefront was whether or not to continue having bars close at 2:00 a.m. versus 3:00 a.m., including a plan going forward. The task force discussed this and decided it was not their place at this time to provide a recommendation regarding this topic. He said that whatever decision Council has, it should be permanent versus having a sunset clause. He said nothing is ever really permanent, as the Council could always vote to change it again, but the task force felt there should not be a sunset date. He added their goal is to help give a direction to bar owners regarding staffing, inventory, and marketing plan for 2021. He noted that the plan is mostly for security.

Alderman Geenen asked if the downtown bar owners had been provided with any reports or studies regarding plans for the area from the past. Planning and Redevelopment Administrator Miles Brainard said Council was provided with copies of ordinances relevant to the discussion, and they are aware of long-standing issues surrounding the area. He said the task force feels this is a policy for the Council to decide upon. He added the Council should be proud that the group of citizens was so careful in providing succinct feedback.

Alderwoman Swanson asked if the task force was provided with any downtown revitalization plans. Mr. Brainard replied that it was reviewed extensively. Mayor Thoms reminded that once a downtown manager is hired, stakeholders would be added to the task force, and it would not be City-driven at that point. He added the City would also have a seat on the board.

Alderman Parker said the task force did a good job. He noted that there is a desire to change the downtown but shouldn't harm businesses that are doing well, and the task force recognized how difficult of a decision this is. He said the City needs to come up with a plan for downtown security and public safety.

Mayor Thoms said the City Manager and Police Chief have been working on a plan, which raises additional questions to be discussed soon. He asked Council what their vision for the downtown would be, not just for two or three blocks, but from 15th Street at Centennial Bridge to 20th to 24th Streets down and from 5th or even 7th Avenues down to the river.

Alderman Poulos said when he started working for the City, the downtown was lively with many places to go. He recalled a discussion regarding the removal of the plaza, and asked if that was still in the plans. Mr. Tweet said if the City were to open up the plaza, it would look similar to the section opened several years ago. Alderman Poulos said his vision is to bring the aforementioned ambience back to the downtown. He suggested possible business ideas for the empty buildings as well as creating a family-friendly environment for daytime activities. Mayor Thoms said he agreed and has seen transition situations in other cities where the daily family environment moves to nighttime adult activities. He expressed a desire to see less night club situations in favor of more boutique bars, as well as more retail businesses. Alderman Poulos said many establishments in the early 1990s had dress codes, and if the feeling of safety in the downtown returned, the other side of attracting people would fix itself.

Alderman Parker replied, but a poor connection kept his comments from being heard. Alderman Spurgetis said it would be good to have a goal for all activity for everyone in the downtown. He added that the City is moving in the right direction, and safety is the top priority. Alderman Geenen agreed with Spurgetis, and said Council should keep in mind the YWCA plans to build an 11 to 13 million dollar facility in the downtown area, which he hopes would encourage development. He added a plan being in place for a downtown manager to begin with would be better than having a situation to inherit.

Alderwoman Swanson said she agreed with what was being stated by Council, but added the key part was to determine what the perimeter of the downtown might be, as it would drive the atmosphere in the area. She wants the area to be family friendly and safe, and if it is not perceived as safe, people will not come. She said it would behoove the business and bar owners to work with the City for ways to make the downtown safe, as it should be a partnership. She agreed that smaller businesses such as a piano or wine bar should be considered, and people should find the area safe after dinner in order to spend more time for the night life. She noted additionally that there are many different ages that utilize the area, such as college students.

Alderman Parker said he agreed that the downtown area needs to be safe, and has spent his time as Alderman to get a plan such as this in action. He would like to find a way to get more events in the area and improve the infrastructure without focusing on closing times for the bars. He added the Council can get to where it needs to be without focusing on closing bars at 3:00 a.m., but rather have a broader perspective in terms of security and self-funding. He asked Council to consider how to create systems that grow the downtown area.

Mayor Thoms said the ideas presented are good, but changes may not be seen for another 12 to 24 months. He asked about fencing and gates in the area, and whether or not it helps safety, or make people shy away because it does not actually feel safe. Alderman Parker replied there is an immediate need to secure the area, even if the closing time becomes 2:00 a.m., and the focus should be long-term. He added the focus should not be placed on one block and the difficulty surrounding it.

Alderman Poulos asked if he understood the issue as the perception of the people would be regarding the downtown. He suggested analyzing other communities and what steps they have taken to create vibrant downtown areas. He agreed that when gates and wands are used, it may create an impression of an unsafe atmosphere. He suggested a survey to acquire opinions from the public regarding safety. Alderman Parker said he has been wanded in downtown Chicago and it did not deter him from going to a night club, and it never has deterred him. He agreed that it does create an image, but said image references events that have generally taken place after midnight. He added that if the City wants to have separate daytime and nighttime economies, actions like wanding after midnight would need to happen.

Alderwoman Swanson mentioned if portable fencing was to be up at 10:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday nights it would not be intrusive, and may be expected by the public. Alderman Clark added the addition of fencing and wanding in the past has actually brought more people into the area, and he supported the idea. Alderman Poulos noted that if fencing were to be up at 10:00 p.m., there would already be some people within the perimeter, and to secure safety there should be a plan to minimize the probability of something happening.

Mayor Thoms asked what type of fencing would be used, such as a bike rack style or a snow fence. Alderman Parker said there are issues beyond fencing, including staffing and the monitoring of parking lots around the fenced area. He added the bike rack style of fencing would work fine, but would rely on more knowledgeable opinions. Mayor Thoms said his

reasoning for asking was due to cost and what plan to enact in the short term, including lighting and cameras. Alderwoman Swanson expressed concern that the fencing not appear oppressive and unsafe. She approved of the bike rack style for portability and optics purposes. Alderman Poulos asked if it would be appropriate to send ideas to Mr. Tweet and the Chief of Police. Mr. Tweet said ideas can be sent, and the Chief and Public Works are currently working on plans. Alderman Poulos said that Council could send ideas of the type of businesses wanted in the downtown to Mr. Tweet and Alderman Parker for consideration.

Mr. Brainard said the discussion during the meeting is similar to what can be found within the 2015 Revitalization Plan. He said the goal is to balance the type of business and activity that would benefit everyone.

Mr. Tweet said there is still a restriction on the bar closing time, and the sunset date would expire at the end of February if no action is taken. He asked if Council wished for Staff to bring the Ordinance forward again for discussion. Alderman Poulos said it needs to be addressed and Council can vote accordingly. Alderman Parker said a decision has to be made regarding this, but it needs to include discussion on safety and security.

21. Motion to Adjourn

MOTION:

Alderwoman Swanson moved to adjourn; Alderman Parker seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 6-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Geenen, Clark, Spurgetis, and Swanson. Nay: None. Absent: None.

Alderman Hurt was unable to vote due to a dropped connection.

The meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Josh Adams, Deputy City Clerk