

**CITY OF ROCK ISLAND
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION**

February 28, 2022 - 5:00 p.m.

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

2/28/2022 - Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Thoms called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

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.

ROLL CALL

Mayor Thoms asked City Clerk Samantha Gange to call the roll. Present: Alderperson Judith Gilbert, Alderperson Jenni Swanson (virtual), Alderperson Dylan Parker (virtual), Alderperson Mark Poulos, Alderperson Healy, and Mayor Mike Thoms. Absent: Alderperson Moses Robinson and Alderperson Randy Hurt. City Staff: Interim City Manager John Gripp, City Clerk Samantha Gange, and other City staff.

Alderperson Robinson joined the meeting at 5:02 p.m. Alderperson Hurt joined the meeting virtually at 5:15 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Thoms asked if anyone in the public wished to speak. No residents volunteered to speak in person or virtually.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY PRESENTATION ON SIMPLICITY

Information Technology Director Tim Bain came to the front to present. He reminded Council of one of the goals to enhance communications. Mr. Bain discussed a new app called Smart City on the Simplicity platform, which the City can utilize to assist in satisfying that goal. He said it could be used with smartphones as a way to communicate with City residents. He described the Simplicity app as a communications platform for municipalities, which does not cost residents or the City. He said users have the ability to receive updates and notifications from Rock Island or any of its partners, as well as a way to submit a concern to the City. He then provided an example video for the city of Homer Glen, Illinois, which explained the platform and its benefits.

Mr. Bain said he experimented with the platform, and noted that currently the messages are going to a generic mailbox managed by the City Clerk. He provided a sample of what could be done with a concern submitted by a resident, which would have a photo and a location provided in an email to staff. He referenced previous discussions regarding the SeeClickFix app, which would automatically integrate with the Cityworks program, noting that Simplicity does not have that capability. He said Simplicity would be free, as opposed to SeeClickFix, and he would like to move forward with rollout for the platform. He noted that Simplicity has requested information on the school system, libraries, and Police Department in the City to help integrate them into the platform.

Mr. Bain said the platform is ready for launch whenever approval is given, and noted there are marketing materials and press releases available. He said it could also be made available as a link on the City website. Alderperson Robinson asked about the free aspect of the platform. Mr. Bain replied the funding for the platform comes from advertising, which could eventually be a part of the app, but in the beginning they hope to develop a customer base. Alderperson Healy asked if the app has the geolocation consistently on for gathering data, and Mr. Bain replied the user has some control in the app settings. He added that when he ran the app for a trial, it prompted him whether or not to allow the app to use the phone's GPS.

Alderperson Poulos asked if the app allowed for two-way communication. Mr. Bain replied that was an option, and also stated that the app offers a polling feature for the purpose of gathering feedback. Alderperson Gilbert asked if the app offered a feature to receive ward-specific notifications, and Mr. Bain replied it could be possible. He added that the categories for information could be selected by ward in the interests menu. Alderperson Healy asked if the City and staff had the bandwidth to be able to use the app. Alderperson Gilbert asked how the app would connect to each alderperson. Mr. Bain replied he could set each ward up as a category for notifications send to specific emails.

Alderperson Robinson asked if the City did not have control over the database. Mr. Bain said that was not entirely the case, as there is an admin console for the City with a simple interface. He provided examples of the app's administrative capabilities, including the collection of information from the City's website. Alderperson Robinson clarified his question. Mr. Bain replied information could be added to the database, and items could be removed. Alderperson Robinson asked if someone on staff would need to be trained to administer the database. Mr. Bain said no training would be needed. Alderperson Healy asked how much time each week would be allocated to the app. Mr. Bain replied it would depend on how interactive the City wished to be with users. Alderperson Gilbert asked if all City events on the calendar could be pulled from the website and sent as notifications. Mr. Bain confirmed that it was already doing so automatically.

Alderperson Robinson said he liked the concept but wished it could be integrated with existing systems. He also noted concern regarding the amount of time needed to manage the platform, as there is already difficulty maintaining social media for the City. Alderperson Healy said this was a good idea, but he did not want a positive to turn into a negative. Mr. Bain said staff has already developed a working relationship with Simplicity, who is willing to assist in addressing concerns. He suggested going slow with the rollout of the platform to monitor reaction and progress. Alderperson Robinson asked what was different about the app than Facebook, as there are many of those pages, but they are not maintained. He also asked if the app would take over each department's social media accounts. Mr. Bain replied the admin console on the app should have capability in the future of automatically populating a Facebook or other social media page. Mayor Thoms noted that this issue is related to the potential need for a communications staff member.

Alderperson Poulos expressed concern about breach of contract if the app turns out to be undesirable. Mr. Bain confirmed there is no contract and there would be no penalty for ending the City's involvement. Alderperson Poulos asked who would measure the success of the app.

Mr. Bain replied success could be measured by monitoring subscriber levels and user metrics. Interim City Manager Gripp noted that staff is evaluating possibilities to address the communication portion of Council goals.

Aldersperson Gilbert asked if Council was expected to provide a yay or nay, and Mr. Bain replied he was looking to gauge Council's interest. Aldersperson Robinson said he was in favor of proceeding. Aldersperson Healy said it could be a great tool if done properly. Aldersperson Gilbert said she would want to have a 3rd Ward notification category. Aldersperson Swanson said it sounded good, as did Aldersperson Parker.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARPA) PRESENTATION - PLAN DEVELOPMENT

City Clerk Samantha Gange provided an update on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) process, as well as development and guiding principles with the intention of gathering feedback from Council. She gave an overview of the eligible uses for ARPA funds, including public health funding, negative economic impacts, lost public sector revenue, pay for essential workers, and infrastructure projects. She noted the City must be evidence-based in how the funds would address and identify needs. She said there are seven expenditure categories to report to the U.S. Treasury Department.

Ms. Gange said the City is in a good position due to being patient, and there exists the opportunity to see what other municipalities have done with funding. She noted that the U.S. Treasury has provided a final rule for ARPA, which provides flexibility and a wider range of uses, such as drinking water projects. She said it also clarifies what classifies as a capital expenditure. She said the most significant change is allowing municipalities to take \$10 million as lost revenue for general government services. She noted the City did not have lost revenue for 2021, and thus it can be used in a broad purpose with minimal restrictions and no requirements for justification.

Ms. Gange introduced a proposed process and plan development, suggesting the use of a data-centered approach. She proposed having an internal data analysis and meeting with each Council member individually and all City departments. She said the City's strategic plan should also be used to drive the ARPA plan. She noted the internal data could come from City departments, specifically the Community and Economic Development Department. For external data, she pointed to potential surveys, town hall meetings to ensure engagement with both low and high-tech members of the community, and census tract data amongst others. She said the data could be compiled going into the process.

Ms. Gange next discussed the steps in the process. The first would be to provide an internal form to ensure project eligibility under the Treasury rule. The form would have a query on whether funds could be matched, performance indicators, whether or not there is a need for census tract data, the project cost and timeline, and whether it is an existing or new project. Once a project has been determined as eligible there would be a scoring matrix or rubric for the project. After scoring a project, it would be put on a list for Council to review. She said the plan would also outline checks and balances as well as policies and procedures.

She then discussed the communications portion of the process, which was noted as a Council goal. She suggested engaging a community partner to assist with setting up an ARPA dashboard, which would inform stakeholders and residents. She noted the importance of gathering stakeholder support before executing any plan, as it would help in controlling the narrative of ARPA funding. She discussed the need for varying methods and frequency of communication. She noted the importance of doing a risk assessment for projects as well as

having funding strategies to determine returns on investments.

Ms. Gange noted the importance of leveraging local, state, and federal matching grants as well as engagement of community partners to leverage funding. She said the City has been signed up for the National League of Cities free ARPA grant navigation program, which will help to match funds and provide grant opportunities that staff might be unaware of. She discussed the next step in the process, or how to evaluate projects. Markers such as whether it fulfills a goal, whether it is sustainable or measurable, and whether it has specific outcomes.

Ms. Gange requested Council feedback on the process. Alderperson Gilbert asked whether the aforementioned plan to be compiled would include all projects. Ms. Gange replied that the plan includes gathering data, presenting the data to Council, and asking Council members to rank in terms of needs based on the objective data. Alderperson Gilbert asked if the plan would include general categories or specific projects. Ms. Gange replied it would include specific projects to review. Alderperson Poulos asked if there had been consideration to an interactive broadcast to residents regarding the plan. Ms. Gange said that is possible, and noted that residents could join town hall meetings virtually. Alderperson Gilbert noted additional ways for senior residents to participate by dialing into a meeting via phone.

Alderperson Swanson said everything sounded good. Ms. Gange said many things could be done with the money to move the City forward. Alderperson Parker asked how she envisioned the process of ranking taking place after the decision has been made with projects to fund. Ms. Gange said using community feedback and working with City departments will be the most important aspects of the process. Alderperson Healy said the presentation provides Council a road map for how to proceed. Ms. Gange said she has spoken with other individuals working through ARPA such as Ryan Berger from Rock Island County, and there exists the idea to meet other ARPA representatives in the Quad Cities to discuss the process. She also mentioned the possibility of partnering with the County on projects. Alderperson Gilbert said a top priority should be hiring a communications professional to take control of the City narrative. Mayor Thoms thanked her for the presentation.

LIBRARY UPDATE

Library Director Angela Campbell said she would be presenting 2021 outcomes for the library system, as well as what she identified as the 4-10 report that must be provided each year to Council. She noted that the full report was submitted within 60 days after the close of the year per statute. She first discussed financial results, which she said were misleading because it included payment of \$555,000 for the Johnson Controls HVAC project. She said the library came in at eight percent under budget for operating expenses, in part due to lack of hiring for positions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She said around 95 percent of library revenues come from local and state funding.

Ms. Campbell next discussed expenditures. The largest library expenditure is personnel at 61 percent, followed by services, other, transfers, encumbrances, and finally supplies. She noted the decrease in ten personnel positions over the previous seven years. She said the supply budget varies by year, mainly due to buying in bulk through state purchasing. She added that the service expenditures will be likely to increase going forward, due to specific items such as snow removal and outdoor maintenance. She said electronic library materials are also expected to increase in cost, and at the moment cost more for libraries than the public. She noted that the category labeled 'other' is expected to increase in cost as ordering items for the new library commences.

Ms. Campbell then discussed transfers and contingencies, noting that \$90,000 of the

expenditure total is for the bond repayment for the HVAC project. She noted an increase in fleet expense due to the rental for a mobile truck lease. She expressed concern about the HVAC project and would speak with the Interim City Manager regarding the expected \$30,000 in savings that have not been seen as of yet.

Ms. Campbell provided a statistical overview of what took place at the library in 2021. The total number of library materials used in 2021 was 238,809 and there were 18,000 more visitors than the previous year. She also discussed the various partners the City Library works with, including neighboring communities.

Ms. Campbell recapped the calendar year 2022 request. She noted that in February 2021 the Library Board requested a 12.6 percent increase in library tax levy revenue. Also, in December 2021, Council approved a \$160,865 increase in library tax levy revenue, and another \$100,000 of general fund dollars, which nearly covered the request. She thanked Council for the additional funding, noting that it makes it easier for staff, and some delayed improvements can be considered. She asked that any extra dollars at the end of the year go into the library's assigned building fund as opposed to relying on the Capital Improvement fund.

Ms. Campbell also requested via the Library Board a seven percent increase in funding to offset the national inflation rate in the coming year. She pointed to the previous ten years of property tax revenues received by the library and the various fluctuations therein. Alderperson Gilbert asked if the request was to use the extra \$100,000 from the General Fund that Council previously approved to roll into the tax levy for the next year, plus an additional seven percent. Ms. Campbell confirmed yes.

Ms. Campbell provided information on why the increase in funding was requested. She said funding has not kept with rising inflation rates, which makes it difficult to maintain library services and serve the most people. She also noted the inflation for print and electronic library resources, which has averaged around five percent per year, as well as the skyrocketing inflation of natural gas, water, and electricity.

Ms. Campbell discussed the difference between equal and equitable access to library services as well as what the library provides to the community. Some of these services include the Library2Go mobile service, the YMCA/Library partnership, homebound delivery and outreach, school outreach, and print, online, and streaming resources.

She next discussed the required accumulations and liabilities portion of the annual report. She said there had not previously been liabilities until the Downtown Library HVAC and lighting project bonds were issued. Accumulations include a 90-day reserve per the City finance policy, and an assigned reserve fund for building projects.

Ms. Campbell discussed the effects of the COVID pandemic on the library system. She noted the programs and resources that started in 2020 and are still in effect today. She then thanked Library Board members, the Milan-Blackhawk Area Public Library District, the Library Foundation Board, members of the public, and Library staff for their efforts. She paused to entertain questions from Council. Alderperson Gilbert commended Ms. Campbell and noted she was glad the Library increased operating hours.

Ms. Campbell discussed the strategic plan and goals for 2022-2025. The four main goals were named as transformative, relevant, equitable, and engaged. She said the methods of developing the plan came from both internal and external sources. External sources included public surveys, community conversations, and planning. Internal sources included the Staff Strategic Planning Committee, a staff survey, the Board Community Planning Committee, and internal patron tracking documents.

Ms. Campbell discussed the Library Mission, which states “The Rock Island Public Library makes our community stronger by connecting people to resources, services, events, and each other”. She then discussed the Library vision, which states “Enhancing the livability of our service areas by offering in-person and online resources that cultivate literacy, belonging, and personal growth”. She then discussed staff values related to goals that were developed by the Staff Strategic Planning Committee. She noted the staff culture statement, which reads “Planting the seeds of success by nurturing professional growth through the values of Transformation, Relevance, Equity, and Engagement”.

Ms. Campbell discussed the first goal, ‘Transformative’, in which the community will experience renewal and achieve personal goals by using library resources including materials, services, and events. She noted that in year one of the strategic plan, there will be five library locations including the mobile service, and the goal is to differentiate the locations and define how each can help with transforming lives.

Ms. Campbell discussed the second goal, ‘Relevant’, in which the community will experience resources and facilities in response to community wants and needs. She noted the objectives of the goal, including work to the downtown location, upgrading service points, new shelving, and rearranging resources. She added that when appropriate to the mission, fast-track purchasing materials and programs considered ‘trending’ will be available within a week of learning about them.

Ms. Campbell discussed goal three, ‘Equitable’, in which the community will experience mutual respect and belonging at all library facilities and events. She noted utilizing the West End Assessment and partnering with the Martin Luther King Jr. Center. She said staff will participate in the American Library Association’s diversity, equity, and inclusion program, which has a scorecard for libraries to review. She added staff will review internal policies and procedures to ensure there is no exclusion. She said staff will look to have the Library2Go vehicle visit more underrepresented areas once freed from the current schedule. She said there is a hope to find a funding source to help the library become fine-free by 2024.

Ms. Campbell discussed goal four, ‘Engaged’, in which the community will experience a connection with the library that is intentional, with measured outcomes. She noted the plan to implement a year-long campaign to celebrate 150 years of public library service in the City. She said Adult Services staff will participate in four or more field trips per year to community areas to learn first-hand of local resources. Another objective is to implement 12 or more library card registration and education efforts outside of library locations per year. Ms. Campbell also discussed a proposed literacy action plan, with six goals and action steps to promote and support literacy development in the community.

Ms. Campbell summarized the presentation by discussing how the library could help the City achieve strategic plan goals. She said staff kept the strategic plan goals in mind while attempting to determine the library’s own plan, particularly with economic development. She entertained questions from Council following the presentation. Alderperson Healy asked if there were classroom field trips into the library itself. Ms. Campbell replied that classes do not have that in their curriculum, but the library comes to them, and noted she would like to have field trips come to the new building when available. Mayor Thoms thanked the Foundation and Library Boards for their time and leadership.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

MOTION:

Aldersperson Poulos moved to adjourn; Aldersperson Gilbert seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 7-0-0 roll call vote. Aye: Parker, Poulos, Healy, Robinson, Hurt, Gilbert, and Swanson.

The meeting adjourned at 6:22 p.m.



Josh Adams, Deputy City Clerk