

CITY OF ROCK ISLAND
CITY COUNCIL MEETING

City Hall

1528 Third Avenue, Rock Island IL

City Council Chambers, 3rd Floor

8/23/2021 - Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Thoms called the meeting to order at 6:47 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

2. This meeting will also be conducted by audio and video conference without the requirement of 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 Josh Adams to call the roll.

Present: Alderman Moses Robinson, Alderman Randy Hurt, Alderwoman Judith Gilbert, Alderwoman Jenni Swanson, Alderman Dylan Parker, Alderman Mark Poulos, Alderman Dave Geenen, and Mayor Mike Thoms.

Absent: None.

Staff: City Manager Randy Tweet, City Attorney Dave Morrison, Interim City Clerk Josh Adams, and other City staff.

4. Pledge of Allegiance

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

5. Moment of Silence

Mayor Thoms called for a moment of silence. A moment of silence was observed.

6. Public Comment

Mayor Thoms asked if anyone in the public wished to speak.

Rock Island resident Deb Kutsunis addressed Council regarding American Water and their customer service. She said she went to the Illinois Better Business Bureau listing for Illinois American Water, and found many recent comments on billing practices and poor customer service. She said there is no need to sell the service and privatize it. She asked Council members if they owned stock in the company, and wondered what the driving force was behind the proposal. She said it was an unnecessary path to consider.

Current East Moline and former Rock Island resident Gregg Johnson addressed Council on the proposed sale of the City's water and sewer assets. He noted he was a representative of the Quad Cities Federation of Labor. He referenced a former college class discussion on the future of global warming and the value of water as a commodity. He said turning a water asset over to a private corporation is not a good idea. He said a one-time windfall from a sale to address the systemic failure of the pension system will do nothing but delay the inevitable. He added he had been at the Council presentation from American Water, and found it disingenuous. He opined that if the City sells, future generations would not be able to afford water services, and future City Councils would not have control.

Rock Island resident Ann Sullivan addressed Council on the proposed sale of the City's water and sewer assets. She referenced a newsletter entitled the Hightower Lowdown that discussed the commodification of water, and how Wall Street was beginning to see it as a commodity similar to oil. She expressed concern that the resource was becoming more scarce, and companies were buying up assets. She suggested Council be careful before making a decision to sell.

Rock Island resident Bill Sowards addressed Council on the proposed sale of the City's water and sewer assets. He said he and his family were against the proposed sale, and that he had spoken to nearly 70 people, all who were against it as well. He said as a lifelong resident of the City, he did not want to move. He said he would like to see the measure to go referendum, as the decision should be made by the citizens. He said he spoke with Lt. Jamie Morris of the Rock Island Police Department regarding pensions, who he quoted as saying the City is the best it had been regarding contributions to the pension fund.

Blue Grass, IA resident and City employee Russell Thomas addressed Council on the proposed sale of the City's water and sewer assets. He said water is now a precious commodity, and water levels are at their lowest since 1935. He discussed the City's abilities in controlling the water supply and new ways to explore supply capabilities. He said Alderwoman Gilbert had done a good job of keeping the public informed on the process. He discussed ways that residents could have the measure brought to referendum. He questioned what the driving force was behind Illinois American Water's interest in the City's assets.

New Rock Island resident Cody Eliff and secretary for Davenport, IA AFSCME 887 addressed Council on the proposed sale of the City's water and sewer assets. He said the measure would cut union jobs, and those close to retirement could lose all benefits. He said there would be only one company bidding on the RFP, and they would be less accountable to the people than a City government would be. He said he also supported the Police Commission measure on the agenda, as it is always good to have more community involvement and eyes on an organization

that is not investigating itself.

Rock Island resident Bridget Ehrmann addressed Council on the proposed sale of the City's water and sewer assets and the proposed Police Commission. She first commended Council for the June study session discussion regarding the Commission proposal, noting the back and forth dialogue. She said engaged communities are healthy communities, and she thinks the rest of the Quad Cities can see the City as a leading example. Regarding the proposed water asset sale, she said research from other communities shows that there would be no other benefit than an initial cash windfall. She said she received a push poll survey that American Water funded that she felt was more of a biased and misleading series of questions. She said she would prefer to have a referendum on the matter.

Milan resident and President of the Rock Island County NAACP Bonnie Ballard addressed Council on the establishment of a Police Community Relations Commission. She thanked elected officials, City staff, and the City Legal Department to develop the ordinance and approve the language. She said she visualizes the ordinance becoming a living document that results in a healed and progressive community to serves all people and begin the healing process.

Moline resident and Director of Government Affairs for the Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce Jake Ford addressed Council and praised them for taking the initial steps to secure a RFQ (request for qualifications) regarding the City's water and sewer assets. He noted a letter sent by the Chamber in March of 2021 which outlined the reasons they believed exploring the possibility of a sale would be a worthwhile goal. He said the Chamber would not take a position on the final sale until a RFP is issued and facts surrounding the proposal became clear. He said facts would be best provided through the RFP process and encouraged the Council to continue.

Rock Island resident Thurgood Brooks addressed Council regarding the proposed Police Community Relations Commission. He thanked his team and supporters for their efforts. He thanked Council for taking time out of their schedules to discuss the proposal. He said he was not so naive to believe the measure would solve all issues, but rather noted it would be a critical vehicle to begin addressing them. He noted his team is open and flexible with their time, and added it was important to take time to ensure those involved with the Commission meet the appropriate criteria. He reminded that the Commission is not an us versus them measure, but rather a mission to have the future be better.

7. Minutes of the August 9, 2021 City Council meeting.

MOTION:

Alderman Robinson moved to approve the minutes as printed; Alderman Geenen seconded.

VOTE:

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

8. Update Rock Island

Dog Day at the Park! Come celebrate National Dog Day with the Rock Island Public Library on Thursday, August 26th. Join us at 8:00 am in Hasselroth Park, in the Eleanor Wallace Dog Park

at 2738 2898 78th Ave West in Rock Island. There will be a story, dog craft and a dog meet up. Bring your own dog and join us for a puppy party!

Monarch March Sunday Funday- The Quad City Botanical Center will host a Monarch March on Sunday, September 5th from 1:00 pm- 3:00 pm. Join gardener Dave as he leads the "flutter of monarchs" around the gardens and mimics their flight path. Participants will get to create their own set of wings before the flight that takes place at 2:00 pm. This event is free for members or with paid admission.

Labor Day Parade- The 37th Annual Rock Island Labor Day Parade will be held on Monday, September 6th at 9:30 am. The parade will start at Washington Jr High School and end at Rock Island High School. The 2021 parade theme is Joy and Peace to the World and asks participants to develop their entries based on what has brought them joy and peace during the COVID-19 shutdown. At today's Labor Day Parade Advisory Board meeting, board members voted unanimously to continue planning for the parade, in lieu of cancellation, and encouraged participants to practice social distancing and mask wearing during this outdoor event.

Holiday Refuse Schedule-Refuse and recycling yard waste collection will be one day late all week during the week of Labor Day. City of Rock Island offices will be closed on Labor Day, Monday, September 6th.

Mayor Thoms reminded the public about the St. Patrick's Day Parade for the upcoming weekend, which had been rescheduled from March. He also reminded the public about the Rock Island Grand Prix, taking place September 4th and 5th of Labor Day weekend.

Alderman Robinson added he wished to recognize local boxer Vershaun Lee for his recent accomplishments. He said Mr. Lee had won the National Golden Glove Championship in the weight class of 138, and he wanted to illustrate what the Rock Island Boxing Club was doing for the City. Members of Mr. Lee's coaching staff came to the front to speak. First to speak was Rock Island Boxing Club founder Ramsey Veasey. He said he started the club in 2006 to be a mentor and keep kids away from the streets. He thanked Council for allowing them to come and celebrate Mr. Lee's title. He also introduced coaches Jeff Perez and Earnest Upchurch.

9. Proclamation declaring Thursday, August 26, 2021 as Women's Equality Day in the City of Rock Island.

Interim City Clerk Adams read the proclamation. Mayor Thoms read his declaration.

10. Presentation of the Financial Management Report for the Second Quarter 2021.

Interim Finance Director Linda Barnes reviewed the Financial Management Report document for the second quarter of 2021. (This document can be found in full via agenda item number 10 for the August 23, 2021 City Council Meeting.)

Upon completion of the presentation, Ms. Barnes asked Council for questions. Alderman Geenen asked if the incoming ARPA funds could be invested. Ms. Barnes replied yes. Alderman Geenen said making a deposit into a local CDFI (Community Development Financial Institution) had been explored, in particular Bridge Investments. Ms. Barnes concurred, and then also concurred with Alderman Geenen's statement that Bridge Investments did not meet the qualifications. Mr. Tweet added they did not have the amount of cash necessary on hand.

Alderman Geenen said Council believed in CDFIs, as they do a lot for the community, and suggested IH Mississippi Valley Credit Union and Ascentra Credit Union, as they likely met qualifications. He said a portion of the ARPA money could be actively put to use with one of those companies, and asked if they could be contacted for consideration. Mr. Tweet confirmed he would. Ms. Barnes said there is currently 13 million already saved across three other investment companies, but the City would receive additional funding the next year. Alderman Geenen said he thought \$250,000 was the maximum that could be held with a CDFI, but it could still be put to use.

Alderman Parker asked which types of funds are more investments rather than cash, citing internal funds like employee health care. Ms. Barnes said internal funds are just funds exchanged from one department to another, and offered to do more research.

Alderwoman Gilbert thanked Ms. Barnes for including the written analysis of the financial report in her memo.

11. An Ordinance amending Chapter 16, Article III, Section 16-34 of the Code of Ordinances establishing a water rate increase of 5.5% for all user classes each year through 2025, effective September 1, 2021. (Second Reading)

MOTION:

Alderman Parker moved to pass the ordinance; Alderman Geenen seconded.

VOTE:

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

12. An Ordinance amending Chapter 16, Article III, Section 16-85 of the Code of Ordinances establishing a waste water rate increase of 4.5% for all user classes each year through 2025, effective September 1, 2021. (Second Reading)

MOTION:

Alderman Robinson moved to pass the ordinance; Alderman Hurt seconded.

VOTE:

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

13. An Ordinance amending Chapter 16, Article V, Section 16-905 of the Code of Ordinances establishing a storm water rate increase for all user classes each year through 2025, effective September 1, 2021. (Second Reading)

MOTION:

Alderman Robinson moved to pass the ordinance; Alderwoman Gilbert seconded.

VOTE:

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

14. Claims

- a. Report from the Human Resources Department regarding payment in the amount of \$15,019.15 to David G. Morrison, City Attorney, for services rendered during the month of July, 2021.
- b. Report from the Human Resources Department regarding payment to Mr. Forrest Robb in the amount of \$46,500.00 for a General Liability Claim.
- c. Report from the Public Works Department regarding payment #2 in the amount of \$45,189.00 to Greenspace Associates, Davenport, IA for services provided from June 30 through July 23, 2021 as part of the 2021 Sod Replacement Program (Project 2141).

MOTION:

Alderman Geenen moved to approve Claims Items A through C; Alderwoman Swanson seconded.

VOTE:

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

- d. Report from the Public Works Department regarding payment #1 in the amount of \$7,500.00 to General Constructors, Inc., Bettendorf, IA for services provided July 23, 2021 through August 2, 2021 for the Clarifier Settling Plate Maintenance (Project 2843)

MOTION:

Alderman Robinson moved to approve Claims Item D; Alderwoman Gilbert seconded.

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

VOTE:

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

15. Claims for the week of July 30, 2021 through August 5, 2021 in the amount of \$681,510.22; for the week of August 6 through August 12, 2021 in the amount of \$1,329,014.65; and payroll for the weeks of July 26 through August 8, 2021 in the amount of \$1,572,391.53.

MOTION:

Alderman Hurt moved to allow the claims and payroll; Alderman Robinson seconded.

VOTE:

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

16. ACH Payments for the month of July 2021 in the amount of \$4,730,926.66.

MOTION:

Alderman Geenen moved to approve the ACH payments; Alderman Parker seconded.

Alderwoman Gilbert asked Interim Finance Director Linda Barnes to explain what ACH payments were to the public. Ms. Barnes stated that they are vendor payments sent via electronic transfer.

VOTE:

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

17. Purchase Card Claims for the period of June 29 through July 26, 2021 in the amount of \$64,702.82.

MOTION:

Alderman Parker moved to approve the purchase card claims; Alderwoman Swanson seconded.

VOTE:

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

18. Report from the Legal Department regarding approval to retain expert witness services in connection with two pending lawsuits arising from incidents at Steel Dam, recommending Genterra at a cost of \$80,000.00..

MOTION:

Alderman Hurt moved to approve payment to retain expert witness services; Alderwoman Swanson seconded.

VOTE:

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

19. Report from the Information Technology Department regarding the purchase of the Cityworks System annual support maintenance in the amount of \$39,894.75 from Azteca Systems, LLC of Sandy, UT, which includes an addendum to move the software online and upgrade to the latest version.

MOTION:

Alderman Geenen moved to approve the purchase and authorize the City Manager to sign the addendum; Alderman Parker seconded.

Alderman Robinson asked how the system could be expanded to include resident complaints. Mr. Tweet said it could, but it would take time and effort. He added it would be preferable to wait and include that as part of the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) process and developing a communications plan. He said if it is determined that this system is the best way to receive complaints, expansion would be considered.

Alderwoman Gilbert asked if it was the Public Works department alone that used the system. Mr. Tweet replied it is currently the only department, but it could be expanded.

VOTE:

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

20. Report from the Information Technology Department regarding a proposal from Concentric Integration, LLC of Crystal Lake, IL to update server and desktop equipment for the Wastewater Plant computer system for the amount of \$12,500.00.

MOTION:

Alderwoman Gilbert moved to authorize the City Manager to sign the proposal; Alderman Parker seconded.

VOTE:

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

21. Report from the Martin Luther King Jr. Center recommending extending the agreement for consulting services with Enterprise Community Partners, Inc. to October 29, 2021 at no additional cost to the City.

MOTION:

Alderman Robinson moved to approve the extension of the agreement as recommended, and authorize the City Manager to execute the extension agreement; Alderman Hurt seconded.

Alderwoman Gilbert stated she was looking forward to hearing the forthcoming presentation from Enterprise Community Partners. Mr. Tweet said the tentative date for the presentation would be the second meeting in September.

Alderman Parker asked if the presentation would be about their findings or a plan. Mr. Tweet replied it would be their findings.

VOTE:

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

22. Report from the Mayor's office regarding a request for proposal (RFP) to solicit assistance in the recruitment of a new City Manager.

MOTION:

Alderman Parker moved to authorize the Human Resources Department to hire a search firm to assist in the search for a City Manager as recommended; Alderwoman Swanson seconded.

Alderwoman Gilbert thanked Mr. Tweet for following her suggestion to source advice from other City Managers. She requested that along with HR, Craig Malin's email proposal that was sent to Council be considered. Mayor Thoms said that would be considered. He invited former Rock Island City Manager John Phillips to speak about the process of hiring for the position.

Mr. Phillips introduced himself as the Senior Advisor for the International City/County Management Association and the Illinois City/County Management Association. He described his role in the position as providing advice to other city managers and administrators, as well as providing services to cities and counties. He discussed reasons why the opening is an attractive opportunity. He noted that having a vision of what Council wished to accomplish would assist in the hiring process to match with the best candidate.

Mr. Phillips discussed potential recruitment issues that the City might encounter. He said the first issue would be whether the recruitment would be done in-house by the City, or through a specialized search firm. He discussed the advantages of hiring an outside firm. He said a community profile is usually completed to assemble community information, as well as a position profile to determine the skills Council would want in a hire. He noted it would be good for Council to identify the skills and personal characteristics they would like a candidate to have prior to conducting the search.

Mr. Phillips discussed the process in which a search firm would assist in finding candidates. He said a search firm would also assist in negotiating an employment agreement, and noted that a search process typically takes four months to complete. He said he sent a guide for recruiting to Mr. Tweet for review that is produced by his member association.

Alderman Geenen said he had a conversation with Mr. Phillips in between the special and regular meetings regarding Mr. Phillips involvement in assisting Council. He added that he was grateful for Mr. Phillips' input contribution. Mr. Phillips said it would be a good idea for the next City Manager to be a member of the aforementioned associations due to the plentiful resources and connections they offer. He said choosing a City Manager is one of the most important decisions elected officials can make, as they are the primary person to help them implement goals and priorities. He thanked Mr. Tweet for his service to the country and the community.

Alderwoman Gilbert asked Mr. Phillips if he would prefer to share the firms he would recommend through email as opposed to discussing at the moment. He said he would send a list to Mr. Tweet, who said he would distribute it along with other documentation. Alderwoman Gilbert asked Mr. Phillips if he recommended getting feedback from the City of Moline regarding their searches. Mr. Phillips said Moline was unique, and have used two search firms, Baker Tilly and GovHR. He added that the firms will propose many of the same services he had previously discussed. He said candidates may have been discouraged from applying with Moline due to the difficulties that City has had.

VOTE:

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

23. An Ordinance authorizing the issuance of two series of unlimited tax General Obligation Bonds,

MOTION:

Alderwoman Gilbert moved to consider the ordinance; Alderman Geenen seconded.

VOTE:

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

24. Report from the Fire and Public Works Departments regarding the approval of the 2021 Rock Island County Multijurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan, and adoption of the resolution.

MOTION:

Alderman Parker moved to approve the draft 2021 Rock Island County Multijurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and adopt the resolution; Alderman Poulos seconded.

Alderwoman Gilbert thanked Public Works Director Mike Bartels for answering her questions about the levee.

VOTE:

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

25. Report from the Finance Department regarding a budget adjustment in the amount of \$72,072.00 to increase revenues and expenses as a result of a grant awarded through HUD for the DeLaCerde House Permanent Supportive Housing Program.

MOTION:

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

VOTE:

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

26. Report from the Finance Department regarding an adjustment to the 2020 Neighborhood Housing HUD-CDBG budget in the amount of \$26,000.00 to cover additional project costs for the Targeted Area Repair and Rehabilitation Program.

MOTION:

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

Alderman Geenen asked if this was for the housing project. Mr. Tweet replied this was for two rehabilitation projects from 2020 that are being finished. Alderman Parker added that the Targeted Area Repair and Rehabilitation Program was created to assist homeowners in the City who have been unable to afford to repair code violations.

VOTE:

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

27. Report from the Mayor's office regarding an amendment to Chapter 3, Section 3-10 of the Code of Ordinances allowing grocery store employees and employees working at facilities operated by the Rock Island Parks Department with a Class L liquor license ages 18 to 20 to sell alcohol as a cashier through the course of their employment. (First Reading)

MOTION:

Alderwoman Swanson moved to consider the amended ordinance; Alderman Parker seconded.

VOTE:

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

28. Report from General Administration regarding the establishment of a Police Community Relations Commission.

MOTION:

Alderman Geenen moved to approve the formation of the Police Community Relations Commission and consider the ordinance; Alderman Poulos seconded.

Alderman Poulos said he had discussions with some individuals who wished to help with the process, as Alderman Robinson was very committed to completing the process. He noted earlier statements from Ms. Ballard during Public Comment, saying they pointed to the number of people involved with changes made to the document with the purpose of bringing the community together. He added the hope is that this would be the first step in the healing process.

VOTE:

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

29. Report from the City Clerk's office regarding a request from Community Home Partners to close 8th Street between 5th and 6th Avenues and 6th Avenue between 8th and 9th Streets on Friday, August 27, 2021 from 10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m for a Bike Rodeo in conjunction with the Rock Island Police Department.

MOTION:

Alderman Parker moved to approve the street closing request as recommended; Alderman Geenen seconded.

VOTE:

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

30. Report from the City Clerk's office regarding street closing and sound amplification requests from Evelyn Day to hold a block party on 43rd Street, 20th to 21st Avenues on Saturday, September 11, 2021 from 1:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

MOTION:

Alderman Geenen moved to approve the requests as recommended; Alderwoman Gilbert seconded.

Alderman Geenen said he had personal invitations for Council members to attend, and called it the party of the 7th Ward.

VOTE:

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

31. Report from the City Clerk's office regarding an Activity permit application from Rock Island High School to hold their annual Homecoming Parade on Friday, September 24, 2021 from 3:30 p.m. to approximately 4:30 p.m.

MOTION:

Alderwoman Gilbert moved to approve the event as recommended; Alderman Hurt seconded.

VOTE:

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

32. Other Business

Alderwoman Swanson wished to discuss the RFQs for the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) fund consulting firms. She said she read through each RFQ and was disturbed that the City would allocate \$200,000 to \$400,000 for a team to create a process for the City on how to spend the funds but not help to decide what to spend them on. She added it would be an unnecessary and wasteful expenditure. She suggested using part of the ARPA funds combined with federal infrastructure funds to upgrade the City's water assets instead of selling them. She said the City should maintain control of the water so residents have access. She proposed not considering the submitted RFQs, and instead have Council and Staff submit five suggestions for spending the ARPA funds to vet at a future study session. Alderwoman Gilbert concurred partially with Alderwoman Swanson that the proposed amount is too much to spend on a consultant. She added that the federal allocation of funds is a once-in-a-lifetime happening for the City, and the funds should be spent wisely in order to receive benefits for years to come. Alderman Geenen added that there is enough expertise amongst Council members to identify the City's needs.

Alderman Parker said Council should consider what has been requested from the offers. He said he would like to use all ARPA funds for the purposes intended. He likened hiring a firm to assist with the ARPA process to enlisting engineers before building a road. He said he hoped to address the real impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting needs. He asked how Council might come up with ways to include perspectives of those most impacted in the decision-making process. Alderman Geenen added Council should recognize all RFPs and RFQs, noting they can be negotiated. He said a lot of time has gone into writing the RFP, and Council should at least do the due diligence and pursue negotiation. He noted Council does need supportive assistance with the process.

Alderwoman Gilbert said there should be a conversation about what Council's priorities are. She said Council should arrange forums in order for the community to have the same conversation. She added the best process once priorities are identified would be to have an open RFP process for anyone to apply. Alderman Parker said he agreed, and that would be spelled out during the process of developing a long-term community recovery plan. He added that the next

step is to identify the closest RFQ responses to what was originally intended. Alderman Geenen agreed and added he would like asset-based community involvement. He said the problems of Rock Island can be solved by the people of Rock Island. He noted the Community Caring Conference and their ability to find solutions in the community, but added they need more of a budget.

Mayor Thoms said he agreed that public input from citizens and business owners is needed before Council sets priorities for ARPA spending. He noted he thought Council members had the knowledge and ability to prioritize spending needs without having to spend the money. He added citizens may get frustrated if money spent on consultants could have been used to deal with other issues. He added Council needed to come to a clear decision on their direction.

Alderman Robinson said the data is needed to drive the discussion. He asked about the Unplugged meetings that had been previously discussed. Mr. Tweet replied that part of the discussion involving facilitation included creating a communications plan, and Unplugged as well as other citizen meetings were to be included. He reiterated his recommendation to hire someone to facilitate the communications process as part of the ARPA fund discussion. Alderwoman Gilbert noted there was one proposal that had more creativity in identifying ways to involve the public in hearing how COVID has impacted them. She added it would offer an opportunity to get ideas for creative solutions for ARPA funds as well, but the price was higher than expected. Alderman Parker asked whether or not it would add value and therefore justify the expense.

Mr. Tweet explained that the dollar amounts listed were only estimates, and Council could pare back expectations to affect the cost as part of negotiations. Alderwoman Swanson said Council needs to identify the purpose of the funds, and added she felt they were for disaster assistance and recovery. She noted the funds should not be for the City to grant them to whomever needs it. Mayor Thoms said he understood from talking to residents that streets were the top issue, and some funds could be diverted to fix them over time. He added there are infrastructure problems apart from social issues that need to be addressed. Alderman Geenen said he is not opposed to spending money to have someone guide Council.

Mr. Tweet said currently the plan was to have RFQ interview candidates before Council at the next study session. He added the likely result from each firm would be different than originally proposed. Alderman Poulos asked for confirmation that the City would not be bound by any terms addressed during interviews. Mr. Tweet confirmed that was the case.

Mayor Thoms said Council needs to be educated on their decisions, and the way to do that would be interviewing top RFQ choices. Alderman Geenen said Council should stick to the schedule that was asked of staff. Alderman Robinson said Council should get the candidate choices to Mr. Tweet. Alderman Parker asked how Council would select the top choices. Mr. Tweet said a ranking sheet was distributed that could be used.

Alderwoman Gilbert said in conjunction with the selection process, Council needs to have a more detailed conversation on what each feels is the purpose of the funds and how they should be used. She felt Council members had a broad spectrum of opinions on how the funds should be spent, and if an agreement cannot be reached on the purpose, it would be difficult to move forward. Mr. Tweet noted that if the discussion would take place at the next meeting, Council would have already interviewed candidates during the preceding study session. Alderman Parker added that Council should commit to a decision. Mr. Tweet said the potential hire would help Council work through the variation of opinions on spending.

Mayor Thoms said the consensus seemed to be that Council would interview the top candidates and then make a decision whether to pursue hiring or not, and if not, discuss the matter further at another time. Alderwoman Gilbert said before the decision would be made, a conversation is

needed to discuss spending expectations. Alderwoman Swanson said Council could pick the top candidates to interview, then have a discussion during the regular meeting as to what priorities are, which would give the candidates a good idea of what is needed. Alderwoman Gilbert said she is not as interested in having candidates simply present their information again. Mr. Tweet suggested sending him questions that could be given to candidates ahead of time.

Alderman Parker said if a candidate is hired that has experience with long-term community recovery plans, they may be able to answer questions that have been posed. Alderwoman Gilbert said her focus would be the facilitation of public input and offering of solutions. Alderwoman Swanson reiterated she felt it could be a waste of money. Mayor Thoms said that Council's concerns could be explained to the candidates to help work specify the priorities. He said there are other ways the funds could be spent beyond what had been discussed, including new items as part of recovery. Alderwoman Gilbert said the key second question beyond the scope of impact is the return on investment. Mr. Tweet asked each Council member to send him their top four choices of candidates for interview by the following Thursday.

Alderman Geenen noted an event the following evening at Two Rivers United Methodist Church beginning at 5:00 or 5:30 p.m. involving NEST Cafe, and told Council members he would buy their meal if they came.

Mayor Thoms noted that the daughter of Jerry Jones, Director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Center, was recognized the previous week for her mural, and congratulated her. He said the mural was located on 20th Street near Leo's Shoe Repair.

33. Motion to Adjourn

MOTION:

Alderman Hurt moved to adjourn; Alderman Robinson seconded.

VOTE:

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Josh Adams, Interim City Clerk