

10/19/2020 - Minutes

1. Call To Order

Mayor Thoms called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

2. As Part Of His Executive Order In Response To Covid-19, #2020-07, Section 6, Governor Pritzker Announced Provisions Of The Open Meetings Act Requiring In-Person Attendance By Members Of A Public Body Are Suspended, Specifically The Requirement That A Public Body Must Be Physically Present And The Conditions Limiting When Remote Participation Is Permitted.

3. Roll Call

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

Present: Mayor Mike Thoms, Alderman Dylan Parker, Alderman Mark Poulos, and Alderman Dave Geenen.

Alderman Randy Hurt, Alderman James Spurgetis, and Alderwoman Jenni Swanson were present via remote participation in accordance with Governor Pritzker's Executive Order.

Absent: Alderman Ivory D. Clark.

4. Public Comment

Mayor Thoms asked if any residents wished to speak in person or via remote. No residents wished to speak.

5. Overview / Discussion Of 2019/2020 Goals And Action Steps

City Manager Randy Tweet asked Council if they had questions regarding the goals established two years ago. He reviewed action steps from the previous year, including ones that are currently in process. He said departments were asked to reexamine their expenditures and funding as part of Goal 1, Action Step 2, but the pandemic delayed some analysis. Action Step 3 is solar power through Eagle Point Solar, and five years of data have been collected, with results coming soon. Action Step 4 is compensation reform. and there are currently a number of negotiations taking place or completed. Action Step 8 is more open events, such as Town Hall Meetings or Rock Island Unplugged, and the pandemic has delayed some of these. Action Step 9 is exploratory meetings with privatization of water and sewer systems, which is ongoing.

Mr. Tweet said Goal 2 is the Business Improvement District, and the discussion regarding the downtown is ongoing and awaiting direction from Council for Action Step 1. He said a resource guide on how to start a business in Rock Island will be completed by January, and a workshop on succession planning for small businesses will be completed by July 2021 for Action Step 2. Action Step 3 for downtown economic development and marketing is contingent on hiring a marketing position. Action Step 4 is the zero interest economic growth, which is ready to be presented to Council in December. Action Step 5 is the legalization of marijuana, of which licenses were distributed only to a few companies based on their high scores. Action Step 7 is better marketing within the City through the Chamber of Commerce. Action Step 9 is business marketing, promoting throughout the City, and a presentation would be ready in December contingent on the hire of a marketing position.

Mr. Tweet discussed Goal 3 and the subsequent Action Steps. Action Step 1 is the partnership with the Library and YMCA, which is ongoing. Action Step 4 is College Hill development, as well as the development of 30th Street and 14th Avenue. Action Step 5 is executing the Downtown plan, which needs direction from

Council. Action Step 7 is the 11th Street infrastructure improvements, including lighting. Action Step 8 is 11th Street business development, of which the group will reconvene in January of 2021. Action Step 10 is enforcement and creation of the rental ordinance, which is ready to go and needs someone to drive that, but the position is currently not filled.

Mr. Tweet discussed Goal 4 and the subsequent Actions Steps. Action Step 1 is promoting Rock Island as a safe place to live, and a presentation was given in September on the subject. Action Step 2 is promoting and connecting to neighborhoods, which is delayed due to staff openings on the planning side. Alderman Geenen said the position seemed like more of a community organizer than planner. Mr. Tweet replied it could be anyone, including within the community if they wished to step up to do that on a volunteer or low-cost basis. Action Step 3 is to meet with local realtors, and a resource guide would be ready by March of 2021. Action Step 5 is residential housing developments, and that would be something that Rock Island Economic Development would be involved in. Action Step 6 is a crime shooting reduction plan, and a class at Augustana College was to work on that, but a scheduling change due to the pandemic caused the class to end. He added that a police community relations group is in the works.

He asked Council if there were any questions regarding goals. Alderwoman Swanson asked about the 11th Street goals, and what had been done with that. Mr. Tweet said a plan was brought forward to turn an area into a soccer field, but due to the cost, Council did not want to proceed. He said a majority of the site is not usable and would take a lot of work to grade it for walking and draining. Alderman Spurgetis said the status is listed as complete, but asked if it could be listed as pending. Mr. Tweet replied the task was to bring forward what was needed to make the property usable, which was the end of the task. He added that it can be continued, but one part of it is complete. Alderman Spurgetis said he did not want to table the goal, but rather keep it open until a solution can be found. Mr. Tweet said it can be considered a task that can be carried over.

Mr. Tweet discussed policy direction. He said the 2021 budget currently stands at a \$3.2 million deficit, and he would sit with the aldermen regarding the budget next week. He added that some reasons for the large number are the lack of gaming funds as well as an incorrect appropriation of funds between accounts for street projects. New revenue will come from storage taxes, as well as other suggestions from aldermen. Property tax increases will mostly go to Fire and Police pension funds, which is typical of every year. He noted there are a number of suggestions for cost reductions, including eliminating positions or not filling others, as well as continuing to look at public-private partnerships. He estimated the City is not planning to borrow next year, and the reserves have taken a hit, but this year will come out ok due to current reserves and care money. He added that next year may be different due to revenue reductions. Mr. Tweet asked if Council had any questions. Alderman Parker thanked Mr. Tweet for what has been accomplished thus far.

Mr. Tweet introduced Denise Bulat from the Bi-State Regional Commission. She said each goal would be looked at, the strategies under those goals, and what they mean.

Ms. Bulat introduced Goal 1, strategy 1 outsourcing various services and programs with partners throughout the region. She listed the items under Strategy 1, which include the Rental Inspection Program through area home inspection companies, the City Arts Commission through QC Arts or a similar group, the City Parks & Rec Department music events through River Music Experience or a similar group, the Geographic Information System through the Bi-State Regional Commission, CIRLF (Commercial/Industrial Revolving Loan Fund) with an area community development financial institution or CDFI, the CED residential rehabilitation programs through Rock Island Economic Growth or a similar group, and the Centennial Bridge through United Bridge Partners. She asked Council if they had any questions. Alderman Parker asked if Council would be voting for the strategy as a whole, or each category within. Ms. Bulat said the vote would be for outsourcing in general, but changes could be made to subtract or add. Alderman Parker suggested adding the consideration of Illinois American Water. Mr. Tweet said that is a separate item.

Mayor Thoms asked why one would outsource the City Arts Commission. Alderman Parker said the City's Arts Commission is currently updating the City's arts plan, and there is a question as to whether they are active or rather an advisory board. He said the City Arts Commission is composed mostly of volunteers and does not have the authority to do much. He said a funded program through QC Arts could do more. Mr. Tweet said the idea is to allow QC Arts to take funds and make decisions for the Commission in accordance with the arts plan.

Mayor Thoms said the State owns the bridge, and he doesn't know if the bridge should be on the list of goals for 2021. Ms. Bulat provided an update on the latest inspection of the bridge, and it is safe for travel, but is known by the State that reconstruction is needed. Alderman Geenen asked how likely it would be for the next bridge project to be the Centennial Bridge. Ms. Bulat said the Illinois D.O.T. (Department of Transportation) would not abandon the project. Alderwoman Swanson said the United Bridge Partners measure should be removed. Alderman Spurgetis asked why some strategies were listed under Goal 1 instead of Goal 2, and added if the Centennial Bridge is going to be a problem for the City, Council should not lose sight of it. Alderman Parker explained why he included the Arts strategy under Goal 1, and said he was fine with striking the bridge discussion from the goals. Mr. Tweet said having this strategy under the outsourcing goal makes it easier for Staff to follow. Mayor Thoms said he understood from a majority of Council members that it appeared they were ok to strike the Centennial Bridge strategy. Mr. Tweet said the Illinois American Water measure could be moved back into the first strategy.

Ms. Bulat introduced the other strategies under Goal 1. Mayor Thoms and Alderman Parker asked what the 1-Cent Penny-Per-Push Tax was. Alderman Parker said the tax is a one penny charge each time someone pushes the spin button on a video gaming machine within the City limits, and some areas near Chicago have begun to adopt this as part of a revenue source.

Ms. Bulat discussed Strategy 3 of Goal 1, adopt the Injury & Illness Prevention Program for City Employees. Alderman Parker said the City currently has a plan for this, but it is not specific enough. He said the City needs a better policy, and can consult with OSHA. Ms. Bulat said Strategy 4 is to have the Public Works Department receive accreditation with the American Public Works Association.

Ms. Bulat said Strategy 5 is to establish an Office of Inspector General or Ombudsman to provide independent oversight of all City departments and monitor progress regarding adopted plans and goals. Alderman Poulos objected and said that is why there is a City Manager. Mayor Thoms agreed and said creating the position would be paying for something that is already being paid. Alderman Hurt said he would agree with striking that strategy.

Ms. Bulat said Strategy 6 is to create a social worker liaison within the Police Department to address needs not appropriate for the department, such as homelessness, victims that do not want to talk to the police, and other issues. Alderwoman Swanson said Family Resources is currently working on a grant, which would not cost the City money. Alderman Geenen said if they do not receive the grant, there may not be a program, and so it is important to have this for the residents. Mayor Thoms said other cities have been using this program, but it is too early to tell if it works well. Alderman Parker said Family Resources is not the only entity to work with, and the policy directive is to identify other ways to address some chronic issues within the City.

Ms. Bulat said Strategy 7 is to continue with the Zoning Code update. Mr. Tweet said that could be taken off, as the Planning Commission is already doing their workshop, and there is no need to use a vote. Ms. Bulat suggested adding creative staffing measures as a strategy. Alderwoman Swanson said no, because there is no room for a stipend. Alderman Geenen said if the goal is to create community outreach, certain qualifications may not be needed, and could be someone with a background in community organizing. He said the strategy could be listed as finding creative ways for alternative staffing structures to reduce expenses.

Ms. Bulat asked Council if there were additional strategies they would like to add. Alderman Poulos asked if plans for downtown revitalization should be listed within this goal due to the infrastructure designation. Mr. Tweet said it could be under this goal or under Goal 3, Revitalization of Strategic Locations.

Ms. Bulat discussed Goal 2, Expanding Local Economy. She said Strategy 1 is redirecting hotel and motel tax revenue for tourism-specific programming, which includes commissioning a Rock Island Heritage Tourism Plan, funding the Rock Island and Illinois Quad Cities local film office, and multicultural programming. Alderman Parker said Council has received communication regarding ideas for historical tourism within the City. Alderwoman Swanson said Viking River Cruises docks in Davenport, Iowa, and it would be good tourism money to capitalize upon by docking in Rock Island. Alderman Geenen said this is a creative way to find funding for a tourism plan.

Ms. Bulat said Strategy 2 under Goal 2 is adopting a percentage of new development costs to fund a public

arts program, administered by the Arts Commission. Alderman Parker said other cities have a policy that new developments in the City that use TIF funds would be required to pay a percentage of their cost that helps pay for and maintain art in the downtown. Mayor Thoms said he struggled with the idea of 'paying to play' for developers. Alderman Geenen said this is similar to a community benefits agreement, and there are certain things that the City values that are expected. Mayor Thoms said the initial response to this would be seen as a negative by developers because of the additional cost. Alderman Parker said perhaps this could be limited to projects that receive TIF funding. He said this is a method of helping pay for public art, which has been a problem in the past. Alderwoman Swanson there are too many obstacles for development, specifically expense. She said she would like to look at those obstacles to determine what prevents businesses from locating to Rock Island. Mr. Tweet said the City does already compare fees and policies with other cities.

Ms. Bulat said Strategy 3 is to Improve the City's image. Alderman Spurgetis said he thinks of safety as the main part of this strategy. He said the City needs to work on curb appeal. Alderwoman Swanson said residents could take ownership of sidewalks in front of their house as part of improving curb appeal instead of relying on the City. Mr. Tweet said due to the budgetary issues this year, seasonal workers were not hired. He said it would be helpful to be more specific with this strategy to give direction as to what needs to be done. Mayor Thoms said there is more to the idea of curb appeal. Alderman Parker said the City used to have downtown ambassadors that would do cleanup. Mayor Thoms said the issue is more throughout the City instead of just the downtown. He said streetlight outages are also part of this. Ms. Bulat asked if anything should be added under Goal 2. No suggestions were made.

Ms. Bulat discussed Goal 3, Revitalization of Strategic Locations, specifically 11th Street strategies. She said Strategy 1 is to explore creation of a Community Supported Enterprise grocery on 11th Street, utilizing CDBG funding as seed capital in partnership with Western Illinois University's Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs and NPC-11/other community organizations. Alderman Parker said the City has been attempting to get a West End grocery store since the Wal-Mart deal failed. He said this is the idea he came up with in response to the trend of failures of corner grocery stores in rural communities. He said Western Illinois University has someone on staff who goes to communities to set these up. Alderman Spurgetis said he supported the idea. Ms. Bulat asked if there were additional strategies to add under the 11th Street category. Alderman Spurgetis said a grant has been applied for to improve street, sidewalk, and retaining wall improvements along the south sector of 11th Street. He suggested that be continued along the northern end of 11th Street as well.

Ms. Bulat discussed downtown items and strategies for revitalization. She said the first strategy under the downtown plan is to establish "mapping out" of repeat offenders as a condition of court sentencing as identified in DARI's West Palm Beach report. Mr. Tweet suggested placing these strategies under one for the downtown plan. Alderman Parker agreed and said a more pointed policy is needed for the "mapping out" issue. Ms. Bulat suggested separating this issue into a separate strategy. Alderman Parker explained the origin and definition of this strategy. Ms. Bulat asked if there were additional strategies to be added that were not listed. Mr. Tweet said everything mentioned is still ongoing, but asked for guidance on the Library and where the Council stands. Alderman Geenen said Council needs to take into consideration whether or not there is funding available to provide the operating expenses that the Library will need to maintain two facilities. Alderwoman Swanson said there should not be additional operating expenses, as the building in question is taking the place of the old one. She said the Library has a budget, and doesn't believe it will be a strain on the City. Alderman Geenen said the most recent report from the Library said there will be a budget deficit this year. Alderwoman Swanson said it would be unfortunate to halt support to the Library on the cusp of a capital campaign when the City is supporting other entities in the downtown. Alderman Geenen said he is not attempting to manage the Library's budget, but rather call attention to the increase in what is allocated to it. Alderman Parker asked Mr. Tweet to clarify the previous year's support statement for the Library. Mr. Tweet said the previous stance had been to support the Library and to do so going forward. Alderman Parker said the Library should finalize a direction before Council makes a decision. Alderwoman Swanson said the Library was not asking for money and it was unfortunate that anyone would withdraw support. Alderman Geenen said he did not withdraw his support, but financial circumstances have changed. Alderwoman Swanson said the Library should be removed from the goals until they have something to bring to Council.

Ms. Bulat asked if there was anything to add to Goal 3. There were no additions. She discussed Goal 4, Increase Population through Livable Neighborhoods. She said Strategy 1 is to pursue cultural competency

analysis/equity plan/affirmative action and diversity inclusion workforce plan. Alderman Parker said these items were policy recommendations from the regional analysis of impediments to fair housing that the City helped fund. He said many of these recommendations had a timeline that has not yet been met. He explained the definitions of the terms in the strategy, and asked how the City will be pursuing it, as it was supposed to be done. Alderwoman Swanson said impediments to fair housing needs a closer look, and these items should stay together as a strategy instead of being split apart.

Ms. Bulat asked if there were additions that needed to be made to Goal 4. Alderman Parker suggested adding a strategy to Goal 3 in continuing work to utilize the 11th Street Watchtower for temporary and/or permanent purposes. Ms. Bulat said the strategy would be added under 11th Street strategies. Ms. Bulat asked each Alderperson if there were additions for Goal 4. Alderman Spurgetis asked for clarification on the changes to Goal 3. Mayor Thoms said he would like to see additional discussion and study surrounding affordable housing in other neighborhoods as well. Alderman Parker said the Downtown Davenport Partnership does housing market studies, and the information is used for presenting to developers. He asked if an entire municipality could do the same type of market study. Mr. Tweet said it would likely help, but the data is not currently there. He said realtor meetings have provided information on the housing market in the City as well.

Mr. Tweet said there were a number of things in Goal 4 that are continuing. He asked Council if they wanted to move forward with the task force to promote the City as a safe place to live. Alderman Poulos said Council had made it clear that action was needed on reducing gun violence. Mr. Tweet clarified that the task force was to promote Rock Island as a livable place. Alderman Hurt said that should be incorporated into the Improve City Image strategy of Goal 2. Mr. Tweet asked for clarification on who this should be promoted to. Alderman Poulos said he would like to have it focus on the local area. Alderman Hurt added through the realtor groups as well. Alderman Spurgetis said during the break, Council should be thinking about financial limitations and what basics should be accomplished first.

Council and Staff took a ten minute break.

Mayor Thoms was advised by Ms. Bulat that a resident in attendance wished to speak and he called Joshua Shomo up to the podium. Mr. Shomo introduced himself as a representative of the Broadway Historic District Association and resident of said District. He said the Association realizes that their community is tied to the broader community as well, and they wished to offer assistance in any way they can to assist in achieving the goals and strategies. He gave background on the organization, and said they have some limited funds available, and they will do what they can to assist. Mayor Thoms said they have done wonderful things in the past and thanked them.

6. Establish Policy Direction For 2021

Ms. Bulat said each Alderman would list their ten votes, which will be tallied by her assistant Gena McCullough. Alderman Parker asked if each page can be slowly reviewed due to the changes. Alderman Hurt asked for clarification on the numeration of strategies. Ms. Bulat and Alderman Parker assisted in clarifying the strategies and organizing which goals they belonged to. Alderman Spurgetis asked if end or reduce could be added under the safety-gun violence strategy. Ms. Bulat asked Ms. McCullough to make that change. Ms. Bulat gave additional clarification on the verbiage of the strategies and their order in reference to each goal.

Alderman Poulos voted for Goal 1, Strategies A and C; Goal 2, Strategies A, C, and D; Goal 3, Strategies B, D, and E; and Goal 4, Strategies B and D.

Alderman Geenen voted for Goal 1, Strategies A and F; Goal 2, Strategies A, B, and C; Goal 3, Strategies D and E; and Goal 4, Strategies A and C.

Alderman Parker voted for Goal 1, Strategies A, C, and F; Goal 2, Strategies A and B; Goal 3, Strategies A, D, and E; and Goal 4, Strategies A and C.

Mayor Thoms voted for Goal 1, Strategies A, B, C, and F; Goal 2, Strategies A, B, C, and D; Goal 3, Strategy D; and Goal 4, Strategy D.

Alderman Hurt voted for Goal 1, Strategies A and C; Goal 2, Strategies A and C; Goal 3, Strategies B, C, and D; and Goal 4, Strategies A, C, and D.

Alderman Spurgetis voted for Goal 1, Strategies A, C, and F; Goal 2, Strategies A and C; Goal 3, Strategies A, B, C, and D; and Goal 4, Strategy D.

Alderman Swanson voted for Goal 1, Strategies A and F; Goal 2, Strategies A, C, and D; Goal 3, Strategies B, C, and D; and Goal 4, Strategies A and D.

Ms. Bulat discussed the tallies and top vote-getters for the Strategies in each Goal. Mr. Tweet said since the downtown strategy was a top vote-getter, he recommended that DARI focus on that area for the next nine months. Alderman Parker asked if this was the right time to discuss the proposed task force. Mr. Tweet discussed the difference between the role of the task force versus the role of DARI. He asked Alderman Parker for clarification on what roles he would prefer for DARI, as it would affect their work plan. Alderman Parker said it was important to understand what the task force would be doing. Mayor Thoms said there were many things to do and delegate for both DARI and the task force. Mr. Tweet said the task force is a governing board. Alderman Parker said he hoped they would hire the staff that will do the work.

Alderman Swanson said she would prefer DARI to focus on the downtown alone, and expressed concern that it could become another 11th Street. She said the task force should be a governing board that keeps people tasked to a timeline. She said she would like to see a fifty percent minority makeup on the task force. Mayor Thoms said he has identified eleven people or organizations thus far. He said he looked at the potential role of the person or organization instead of just diversity, as that may make it hard to come up with the right skill sets or organization involved. Alderman Swanson said there should be representatives of the population on the task force that look like the area they are going to govern. She said she will continue to push for that type of representation, and said she could provide names. Mr. Tweet said he would continue having them do what they had been doing and when the task force and manager direct them in another direction, they can adjust their timeline.

Mr. Tweet said by the end of November, something will be brought to Council to vote upon, such as a resolution to establish how to spend money for the next few years. He said he sent out the CDBG COVID money recipient list, and would like to fit in a few more businesses. He asked Council if that money should be placed into economic development for things like plexiglass inside of bars or restaurants to abide by regulations. Mayor Thoms asked if there were any pressing issues to discuss due to timing, such as heaters and tents.

Alderman Parker asked what the timeline was for the downtown task force. Mr. Tweet said it needs to be brought forward to Council, and Mayor Thoms needs to find additional names. He said the next meeting on November 9 might be the time to do so. Alderman Poulos said he understood that it should be stakeholders in the area that are on the task force. Mayor Thoms said he had eleven people, and some have a stake in the area, but most are indirect. Mr. Tweet said everyone on the list can be considered a stakeholder.

7. Motion To Adjourn

MOTION:

Alderman Poulos moved to adjourn; Alderman Parker seconded.

VOTE:

Motion passed on a 5-0-2 roll call vote. Aye: Spurgetis, Swanson, Parker, Poulos, and Geenen. Nay: None. Absent: Clark.

Alderman Hurt was unavailable to vote due to a lost connection.

The meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

Josh Adams, Deputy City Clerk