

**CITY OF ROCK ISLAND
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
October 26, 2020 - 5:00 p.m.**

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

10/26/2020 - Minutes

ROLL CALL

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

Present: Mayor Mike Thoms and Alderman Mark Poulos.

Alderman James Spurgetis, Alderwoman Jenni Swanson, and Alderman Dave Geenen were all present via remote connection in accordance with Governor Pritzker's Executive Order.

Alderman Dylan Parker was present, but was unable to communicate due to a technical error.

Absent: Alderman Ivory D. Clark and Alderman Randy Hurt.

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

PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Parks and Recreation Director John Gripp introduced himself and Assistant Director Todd Winter to give an overview of the Parks Department. Mr. Gripp discussed the purpose and mission of the Parks Department in the City. He said the purpose of the department is to enrich the quality life for the community through exceptional recreational and park programs and events, and the vision is to operate attractive, safe parks and top-notch facilities. He added the department provides social, physical, and emotional health benefits to promote a healthy community while maintaining financial stability.

Mr. Gripp discussed the five core values from which the department operates. The first core value is health and wellness, including building a happier and healthier community through the department's programs. The second is teamwork and community, working together to make the City a better place to live through expanded partnerships and surveys. The third is innovation, seeking ways through feedback and research to improve. The fourth is sustainability through more fiscal responsibility through generated revenue and provided means. The fifth is customer service and integrity, providing excellent customer service and modeling ethical and professional behavior.

Mr. Gripp discussed the current staffing levels for the department. He said there are 14 full-time, 43 part-time, and 119 seasonal staff members, and a 2018 department reorganization reduced costs by \$300,000 in salaries and benefits. He talked about the department's financial makeup, with 33 percent of the budget from tax dollars, and 67 percent from revenue generation. He said tax dollars cover park maintenance staff, general maintenance, equipment, vehicles, supplies, fuel, portions of recreational or administrative staff, and free community events. Revenues cover RIFAC operational expenses, the golf course expenses, Whitewater Junction expenses,

recreational program expense, and other expenses associated with fees that the City charges.

Mr. Gripp discussed revenue streams and alternative funding sources. Revenue comes from programming, rentals, sponsorships, and membership fees. He said alternative funding sources is a newer area, and consist of grants, HUD and CDBG funds, donations, fundraising events, friend groups, and partnerships. He discussed the enterprise operations from 2015 through 2019, adding that the economy is stimulated by the amount of activity generated by the department.

Mr. Gripp talked about the challenges facing the department. He began by saying there was a period of six to seven years when the revenue was flat from tax dollars, and there has been a slight increase, but it will be an issue to address through Council going forward. Gaming funds have been relied upon in the past for the department, but those are currently tied up at the moment due to the pandemic and loss of revenue. He said minimum wage is a challenge due to the step increase to \$15 over the next five years, which will create a reduction in part-time and seasonal staff. Another challenge is competition, since neighboring cities have competition for grants has become more difficult, but the department has attempted to partner with local communities for a greater chance at grant success. He said there is also a perception that tax dollars paid are equivalent to membership fees at RIFAC or fees at the golf courses, but tax dollars do not go to those operations. Mr. Gripp discussed the recent successes in the department, including reorganization of the department, partnering with other departments, having public and private partnerships, alternative funding, and transparency through surveys and focus groups.

Mr. Gripp introduced Mr. Winter to discuss their 5 Year Strategic Plan. to provide focus for the department. It was created to align with Council goals, to identify opportunities and efficiencies, and have checks and balances. Mr. Winter said it was created by doing a self inventory, using customer surveys and questionnaires sent to City Council, Park Board members, and Parks staff, and utilizing information from focus groups. He added there was a consultant-led situational analysis workshop, which provided a helpful report.

Mr. Winter discussed Strategic Initiative items for the department. He said they will continue to foster and grow mutually beneficial collaborative partnerships internally and externally, and set a path for long-term financial success. They will streamline the application process for grants and develop strong ties with sponsors. Also, they will instill pride in neighborhoods and the community through clean safe, and usable parks. They will provide an exceptional and diverse programming mix, and will continue to evaluate the recreational needs of the community. They will be the leader in high quality recreational facilities through improvements via capital campaigns. He concluded by saying they will pursue excellence in customer service and employee development by aligning staffing needs with goals.

Mr. Winter discussed the implementation of the strategic plan. He said it will be divided into fiscal years with an Action Plan for each year. He added that there will be set goals and objectives for each employee, programming area, and facility. There will be a bi-annual park walkthroughs that help the department identify necessary repairs to assist in updating the park plan. There will be a quarterly goals review with staff, grant and fundraising reviews, and an annual department review and report.

Mr. Gripp concluded with comments on what will be done going forward. He said the department will use their strategic plan as a tool for success to build reserves in the next few years, as it took a hit this particular year. He added they will continue to expand and form new partnerships, find alternate funding sources, and build the Park Foundation Youth Scholarship Fund.

Mr. Gripp entertained questions from Council members. Alderman Spurgetis thanked them for the report, and said it has been nice to experience the City's parks during the pandemic. Mr.

Gripp said the Public Works Department has been a great partner in helping with the parks. Alderman Parker echoed what Alderman Spurgetis said and thanked Parks staff. He asked Mr. Gripp if the Bi-State Regional Commission can help with grant applications. Mr. Gripp said yes, and the department has utilized that group in the past. Alderman Parker asked if there was a strategic plan per park as had been previously discussed at a prior study session. Mr. Gripp said there are specific plans for each park, and Mr. Winter could provide those to Council members. Mayor Thoms thanked them for their time.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT CIP BUDGET PRESENTATION

Outgoing Finance Director Stephanie Masson began a presentation on the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget. She explained that the budget was a list for now, but once it is finalized, staff will ensure all projects are contained within the budget approved by Council. She said what shows is a list of projects recommended and requested for this year and the next five years, but Council is only approving the 2021 list. The CIP is supported through multiple funding sources, and the budget outlines financing plans consistent with the City's priorities and finances.

Ms. Masson presented what was included in the 2021 CIP budget. \$12.5 million is the total spending for all projects. 39% of that is categorized under miscellaneous, which is usually TIF related, or for redevelopment projects. In this case, \$1 million is currently earmarked for improvements to the parking garage near City Hall. 9% are spent in Utility Funds including water and storm, and 14% is reserved for streets, which is a larger number than in recent years. This project includes the Black Hawk Hills and River Heights road reconstruction west of 30th Street as well as the 40th Avenue Court bridge repair.

Ms. Masson discussed the sources of the funding and the focus areas. The first and largest source are the TIF funds, followed by Gaming funds. She said the third largest source are grants, which has increased over time. The focus areas for the CIP were then discussed. The largest part of the CIP is the 43.1% dedicated to miscellaneous, which includes redevelopment projects, followed by 29.3% allocated to debt services. The third largest portion of the focus areas are the streets at 14.3%.

Ms. Masson provided a more specific description of the Utilities project budget. She said water projects would receipt \$645,000 for the 24th Street Water Tower storm drain as well as funds for engineering and water main replacements. She noted that waste water projects will have no funds, as there are no future projects currently planned. Storm water projects would receive \$450,000, which includes the 24th Street Water Tower storm drain.

Ms. Masson provided a more specific description of the Streets project budget and referenced the previous study session item from Public Works. She said the budgeted streets projects include the 40th Avenue Court bridge repair, 35th Street at 6th and 7th Avenues, and the Blackhawk Hills and River Heights Road reconstructions. She added that street maintenance, including milling and filling, sidewalk repair, brick streets, and concrete patching all utilize local gas tax funds.

Ms. Masson discussed contributions to the CIP budget. She said these account for 4% of the budget, and include partnerships with many local companies and events. She discussed other CIP projects, including body-worn cameras at \$96,000 per year since 2017, as well as cameras and laptops for squads. She said economic development is another CIP project, which includes facade improvement, demolition, rebates, and program support, the last of which may see a stop or reduction in funding. Ms. Masson provided a five year financial summary for CIP and program support within the City, which is organized by department. She said there is a requested amount from each department as well as a recommended amount.

Ms. Masson asked for questions from Council. Alderman Spurgetis asked for clarification on the blank recommended amount for substandard structure demolition. Ms. Masson said that was typically taken out of gaming funds, of which there was not enough to allocate from the source. Alderman Spurgetis asked for clarification on the increase in the recommended parking ramp renovation amount. Ms. Masson said timing seems to have been the issue, and some funds were brought forward from the previous year. She reminded Council that the parking study recommended renovations at \$4 million. Alderman Spurgetis said one option was to demolish the parking lot instead of repairing, and asked if that demolition would come from this same source or something different. Ms. Masson confirmed that the funding would come from this same source. Alderman Poulos asked for clarification about the recommended amount regarding network cameras as it related to the previously discussed body cameras for the Police Department. Ms. Masson explained that the network cameras were more for locations throughout the City. Alderman Poulos asked for clarification about the water main replacement project recommended amount. Ms. Masson said the project was likely completed, and if not, perhaps it still will be. She said the pandemic has caused some projects to be delayed, which would push the funding out further.

Mayor Thoms asked if there were additional questions. There were none.

Josh Adams, Deputy City Clerk