

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
COMMON COUNCIL
June 12, 2023**

The Common Council of the City of Rensselaer met on June 12, 2023 in regular session in Council Chambers of City Hall. Mayor Stephen Wood called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. followed by invocation offered by Russ Overton and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Answering roll call were: Mayor Stephen Wood; Clerk-Treasurer Shelby Keys; Council Members Russ Overton, Noelle Weishaar, Ernest Watson, Jr; City Attorney Jacob Ahler; Building Commissioner Josh Davis; Park Supt. Joe Effinger; Fire Chief Kenny Haun; Police Chief Matt Anderson; Utility Office Manager Heather Smart; Electric Lead Line Foreman Lenny Larson; Asst. Street Supt. Bryce Black; Project Coordinator Jerry Lockridge; Gas Supt. Carol Lockridge; Harley Tomlinson with the Rensselaer Republican. Bill Hollerman, George Cover, and Cemetery Caretaker Tony Baltes were absent.

Also in attendance were Robert Schenk with Rensselaer Adventures, Sharon Colee, Stace Pickering, Garrett Welker, Jeff Rayburn, Kevin Arnold and Cody Heldak.

The minutes of the May 22, 2023 regular council meeting and May 18, 2023 executive meeting were presented. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Overton, to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed by majority, with Hollerman and Cover absent.

Citizen Comments and Petitions: None.

Ordinance 15-2023, Write Off Non-Collectible Utility Accounts: Smart said this ordinance is to write-off accounts older than seven years, those who have filed for bankruptcy or are deceased. There was a motion by Watson, second by Weishaar, to approve the ordinance. The motion passed by majority, with Hollerman and Cover absent.

Resolution 23-2023, June Gas Tracker: C. Lockridge reported that this tracker reflects a 15¢ decrease per 100 cubic feet of gas. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Overton, to approve the resolution. The motion passed by majority, with Hollerman and Cover absent.

Jasper County Community Services City Budget Consideration: Sharon Colee, Executive Director for Jasper County Community Services, said that she is thinking ahead for the 2024 budget. They provide the only public transportation in Jasper County. There are 13,000 households that have individuals over 60 years of age. Senior citizens can maintain their independence through this program. Citizens with mobility issues can benefit from supportive equipment and dependable transportation, adding that they just recently received a grant to assist riders who use oxygen.

There are many individuals who do not have personal transportation. The cost of transportation from Jasper County Community Services is one dollar per one-way trip. This provides cost effective and dependable transportation by trained and certified drivers. The first five months of 2023, there was a total of 3,751 one-way trips provided. Of those 3,751 trips, 3,010 were provided within the city. 85% of the transportation provided is within the city limits and is the primary area of need for local transportation. Colee also stated that she would like to return to the next council meeting for any questions or discussion about the city's support. Watson asked what dollar amount she was thinking. Colee said \$1,000.00 a month, \$12,000.00 per year. There have been numerous requests for weekend and after-hour trips. Watson clarified that the money would only be used within the City of Rensselaer. Colee said yes. Wood said they would take it under advisement and put Colee on the agenda for the next meeting.

Public Relations Fund Request: Anderson said the police department hosted lunch for elementary school kids. Officer Hammond spend \$82.28 on pizza and requested to be reimbursed from the public relations fund. There was a motion by Overton, second by Weishaar, to approve the public relations fund request. The motion passed by majority, with Hollerman and Cover absent.

Amendment to Community Crossing Project: Lockridge said the city left out Augusta Street and it needs attention. He is asking permission for Town and Country to resurface August Street for \$14,360.00. This will be an amendment to the Community Crossings grant. There was a motion by Overton, second by Watson, to approve the request. The motion passed by majority with Hollerman and Cover absent.

Recycling Market Development Grant: Black said they would like to submit a grant application through IDEM that would focus on reuse, reduction and recycling methods, in addition to diverting organic materials from landfills. He would like to replace a leaf vacuum, which will cost \$129,328.83. The grant would provide a 50% cash match. The city would be reimbursed \$64,664.41, if awarded. Funds are available in the sanitation fund. Wood asked what kind of shape the current leaf vacuum is in. Black said the cost of downtime is getting to be exponential. There was a motion by Watson, second by Overton to approve submitting the grant application. The motion passed by majority with Hollerman and Cover absent.

Update Mayoral Board Appointments: Wood said they are looking for two people to serve on the Redevelopment Authority. The Redevelopment Authority would meet if the Redevelopment Commission wants to get bonds. They don't meet often. Those interested in serving would need to live in the city limits. Davis said they are still looking for one person to serve on the Board of Zoning Appeals. They would also need to live in the city limits.

Burial Rights Request: Keys read requests for burial rights for George and Kathleen Groom, April Wireman, and Richard and Carolyn Yeoman. There was a motion by Overton, second by Weishaar, to approve the requests. The motion passed by majority, with Hollerman and Cover absent.

Administrative Comments:

Cover was absent.

Watson said he noticed they were moving dirt at Filson Park. Davis said he was looking at the plans and had reached out to the state to seek approval. They informed him all the plans for public buildings need to be approved through the state design release system. Titan will be doing the additional engineering work that needs done for the state. According to the zoning ordinance, additional approval is required from the BZA for a park, and a public hearing is needed. Davis can't find record that it has been approved by the BZA. Watson said it sounds like there are some details that still need finished. Weishaar asked if this was something that can be put on the agenda for the next BZA meeting. Davis said yes, a conditional use application would need to be filled out. The next BZA meeting is June 13th.

Keys had nothing.

Wood had nothing.

Overton had nothing.

Hollerman was absent.

Weishaar thanked the fire department.

Claims Approval: The claims were presented to council for its approval. There was a motion by Watson, second by Weishaar, to approve the claims. The motion passed by majority, with Hollerman and Cover absent.

Superintendents Reports:

Police Dept: Anderson had nothing.

Law Dept: Ahler had nothing.

Utility Office: Smart had nothing.

Building Dept: Davis said at the last Plan Commission meeting there was a citizen who had concerns regarding pools. They thought there should be pro-rated fee based on height. Davis said the current rule right now states above-ground pools 18 inches or higher requires a \$100.00 permit fee, regardless of if it is permanent or not. The height of the pool is also not factored into the fee. Davis said any pool within the city requires a five-foot fence regardless of height or type. The other concern was the cost to fill up the pool with the city water supply, since they also have to pay sewage rates. Davis said after speaking with the Mayor and other superintendents, that we do not recommend citizens to fill up their pools using city water. Wood said the need for a fence is for safety concerns. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Watson, to table this discussion until next meeting. The motion passed by majority, with Hollerman and Cover absent.

Fire Dept: Haun said we are under a burn ban. The Jasper County Commissioners will be revisiting it tonight. More rain is needed. They have had 21 calls since June 6 and all have been grass fires except one.

Electric Dept: Larson had nothing.

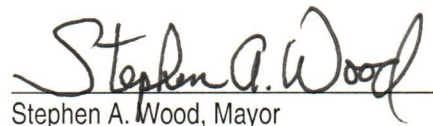
Street, Sanitation, Water and Sewage: Black had nothing. J. Lockridge said the Jasper County Fair Board has requested use of a trash truck for fair week, July 15th-22nd. The fair board will pay disposal fees. There was a motion made by Overton, second by Watson, to approve the request. The motion passed by majority with Hollerman and Cover absent.

Cemetery Dept: Baltes was absent.

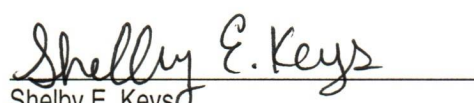
Gas Dept: C. Lockridge said they are going to rebuild the McDonald's regulator station entirely in 2023. She said every ounce of gas the city uses goes through that station and it hasn't been upgraded in 25 years. The cost is about \$117,000.00 and those funds are available in the construction fund. Watson asked if there was a smell issue recently. C. Lockridge said yes, another company's communication line is connected to our odorizer. The company had a sensor go bad, which sent the signal that we were moving a lot of gas. Resulting in more odorant in the gas than needed. Wood said natural gas is odorless. Colee said she appreciates the support and prompt response from the city regarding this issue.

Park Dept: Effinger had nothing.

There being nothing more to come before council, there was a motion by Weishaar, second by Watson, to adjourn. The motion passed by majority, with Hollerman and Cover absent, and the meeting adjourned at 6:47 p.m.


Stephen A. Wood, Mayor

Attest:


Shelby E. Keys
Clerk-Treasurer