

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
COMMON COUNCIL
July 24, 2023**

The Common Council of the City of Rensselaer met on July 24, 2023 in regular session in Council Chambers of City Hall. Mayor Stephen Wood called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. followed by invocation offered by Debbie Voss with the Burr Oak Community Church and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Swearing in New City Council Member: Keys performed the oath of office for new Ward 1 Council Member Kevin Arnold.

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

Also in attendance were Robert Schenk with Rensselaer Adventures, Phillip Roth with American Structurepoint, Shawn Cain with KIRPC, Loren Berenda, Sean Cawby, Caleb DeJong, Debbie Voss, Lydia Arnold, Thomas Bodnar, Dennis Otten with Bose McKinney & Evans, Avery Douglas, Zyan Miller, Jeff Rayburn, Cody Heldak, Mike Davis, Jason and Jennifer Arnold, Nancy Stueder.

The minutes of the July 10, 2023 regular council meeting were presented. There was a motion by Overton, second by Cover, to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Citizen Comments and Petitions: Thomas Bodnar expressed his concerns over a letter he got regarding his swimming pool. He stated there are other pools around town without fences and that are close to the road. Wood said recently council has enforced the rule for a fence around the pool. Davis said he sent out a dozen letters last week to property owners with pools not meeting the requirement. Bodnar questioned why police officers don't patrol the swimming pools. Anderson said there are so many zoning violations that his department is not aware of, he relies on Davis to inform him on issues. Cover asked Davis when he brought the zoning policy to council was he bringing them state code? Davis said one difference between state code and the city, is that the city requires a 5-foot fence. Currently working on amending it to be a 4-foot fence.

Oath of Office for Redevelopment Authority Members: Keys performed the oath of office for new Redevelopment Authority Members Loren Berenda and Avery Douglas.

2023 Comprehensive Plan Recommendation: Roth said the last update to the city's comprehensive plan was in 2007. The plan is meant to guide the growth and development of the city. A public hearing was held at the Plan Commission meeting prior to the Council Meeting and there was a unanimous decision to support the comprehensive plan recommendation. The plan was funded through a grant by the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA). The grant was managed by the Kankakee-Iroquois Plan Commission. There are 13 topic areas in the plan that were required to be addressed. OCRA has reviewed the plan and approved it. There have been 2 major rounds of public involvement.

Resolution 26-2023, Adoption of the 2023 City of Rensselaer Comprehensive Plan: There was a motion by Cover, second by Overton, to approve the resolution. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Resolution 27-2023, ConAgra Foods Packaged Foods LLC Declaratory Resolution for Tax Abatement: Dennis Otten said the County Assessor's office had questions regarding where certain tax abatement resolutions were. The statement of benefit forms were adopted, but declaratory and confirmatory resolutions never were. Otten said the passing of these resolutions' tonight are a procedural correction. There are provisions in the abatement statute for this specific matter. If the declaratory resolutions are passed tonight, the next step would be to hold a public hearing for the tax abatements, then confirmatory resolutions would be passed. He further clarified that no companies have lost abatements due to this procedural error. The tax abatement schedules in these resolutions follow what was previously passed. Weishaar asked if this will extend the abatements another year? Otten said no. But, if the Assessor's Office declined to give an abatement this year to a recipient due to this procedural correction, we would pick up the schedule the following year so they would get an abatement for the amount of years they were initially approved for. There was a motion Weishaar, second by Overton, to approve the resolution. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Resolution 28-2023, Filtration Parts Inc. Declaratory Resolution for Tax Abatement: There was a motion Cover, second by Weishaar, to approve the resolution. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Resolution 29-2023, Indiana Facemask and Geyer's American Melt Blow Filtration LLC Declaratory Resolution for Tax Abatement: There was a motion Overton, second by Arnold, to approve the resolution. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Resolution 30-2023, Gold Bond Building Products d/b/a National Gypsum Company Declaratory Resolution for Tax Abatement: There was a motion Weishaar, second by Overton, to approve the resolution. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Resolution 31-2023, Richard N Reese Family/Genova Declaratory Resolution for Tax Abatement: There was a motion Overton, second by Cover, to approve the resolution. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Ordinance 17-2023, Establishing a Community Development Block Grant(CDBG) Fund: Keys said this ordinance is to establish this fund, as required by the State Board of Accounts, to receive and disburse the funds the city will receive as part of the OCRA CDBG grant that was awarded. There was a motion by Cover, second by Overton, to approve the ordinance. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Ratify Council Poll – Use of EDIT Funds for CDBG Matching Source: Wood said he polled council on July 19th and 20th for approval to use EDIT funds to pay for the City's agreed matching portion of the CDBG grant in the amount of \$5,560.00. Council was in favor 4 ayes and 0 nays. There was a motion by Overton, second by Weishaar, to confirm the poll. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Appointments to the Rensselaer Redevelopment Commission: Cover said he spoke with other council members and they are recommending Jeff Webb and Kevin Smith to serve on the Redevelopment Commission. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Arnold, to approve the recommendations. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Tree Removal – Potawatomi Park: J. Lockridge said there was a quote to remove dead trees from the ditch bank in Potawatomi Park. The quote from Timber Tree Service is for \$9,150.00 and there is funding available in EDIT. Cover asked if they were removing trees from the river. J. Lockridge said just in the area from Washington St. to College Ave. bridge. Arnold asked if this requires IDEM approval. Lockridge said no, they will keep the stumps in place. There was a motion by Overton, second by Arnold, to approve the quote. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

JCEDO – Mural in Potawatomi Park: Miller said she sent an email to the Mayor requesting to replace the mural that is facing Potawatomi Park, at no cost to the city. Extra artists were brought in this year and they are wanting to freshen it up, as it is fading. Council was fine with the request.

Burial Rights Request: Keys read requests for burial rights for Arthur Green and Beverly Randle. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Overton, to approve the burial rights. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Credit Card Statement: Wood asked council for permission to sign the credit card activity log. There was a motion by Overton, second by Cover, to allow the mayor to sign the credit card statement. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent.

Committee Reports: None.

Administrative Comments:

Wood said he has been working with Keys on the 2024 budget and he is asking for a 3% pay increase for 2024.

Cover thanked Effinger and Baltes for how good the parks and cemetery look. Cover asked J. Lockridge about the tile on Owen St. Lockridge said it's flowing, but the tile line may need to be bigger.

Watson had nothing.

Keys welcomed Arnold.

Overton had nothing.

Arnold thanked everyone for the warm welcome.

Weishaar welcomed Arnold.

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

Superintendents Reports:

Police Dept: Anderson had nothing.

Law Dept: Ahler had nothing.

Utility Office: Smart had nothing.

Building Dept: Davis had nothing.

Fire Dept: Haun had nothing.

Electric Dept: Larson had nothing.


Street, Sanitation, Water and Sewage: Black said the lead service line replacement project started last week and 10 lines have been completed. Lockridge said the Community Crossings Matching Grant is 99.9% complete and College Ave is back open. Weishaar said the sidewalks look great.

Cemetery Dept: Baltes had nothing.

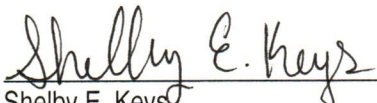
Gas Dept: C. Lockridge welcomed Arnold.

Park Dept: Effinger had nothing.

There being nothing more to come before council, there was a motion by Arnold, second by Weishaar, to adjourn. The motion passed by majority, with Watson absent, and the meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m.


Stephen A. Wood, Mayor

Attest:


Shelby E. Keys
Clerk-Treasurer