

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
COMMON COUNCIL  
September 11, 2023**

The Common Council of the City of Rensselaer met on September 11, 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 Kenin Smith and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Answering roll call were: Mayor Stephen Wood; Clerk-Treasurer Shelby Keys; Council Members Russ Overton, Kevin Arnold, Noelle Weishaar, George Cover, 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. Cemetery Caretaker Tony Baltes was absent.

Also in attendance were Garrett Welker, Karen Stanley, Rick Williams, Brandon Schreeg with Kimley-Horn, Jody Moore, Kenin Smith, Jeff Rayburn, Cody Heldak and members of the Rensselaer Volunteer Fire Department.

The minutes of the August 28, 2023 regular council meeting were presented. There was a motion by Overton, second by Arnold, to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

**Citizen Comments and Petitions:** Rick Williams, President of the Rensselaer Urban Forestry Council, presented an annual report. The RUFC was formed in 2008. They have gotten the city recognized as a Tree City USA community for the past 15 years and have received the Arbor Day Foundation Growth Award for 7 years. They were recently awarded a grant to have tree care manuals printed. The goal of the group is to have as many trees planted that are removed. The group has planted 1,038 trees and 234 trees are scheduled to be planted over the next 5 years. The group would like the city to update the tree ordinance and gave suggestions they would like to see incorporated in that ordinance.

**Resolution 40-2023, September Gas Tracker:** C. Lockridge stated the gas tracker reflects a 28¢ decrease per 100 cubic feet. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Watson, to approve the resolution. The motion passed unanimously.

**Resolution 41-2023, Transfer of Funds:** Keys read requests for transfer of funds. There was a motion made by Weishaar, second by Overton, to approve the resolution. The motion passed unanimously.

**Brick Streets Bid Award:** Brandon Schreeg, Project Manager for Kimley-Horn, said 2 bids were received on August 14<sup>th</sup>. They were reviewed for all pertinent information and that information was provided to KIRPC, who sent it to the US EDA, who has given their approval. The recommendation is to award the bid to Grimmer Construction in the amount of \$2,411,420.00. This includes the base bid and the 2 additives. There was a motion by Cover, second by Watson, to approve the bid recommendation and award the bid to Grimmer Construction. The motion passed unanimously.

**Fire Department Training Tower Grant:** Haun said Rensselaer was awarded a \$1 million-dollar grant. The grant will require the water main to the training site to be upgraded. Haun has been working with city employees to figure out the costs associated with the upgrade. Estimated cost to upgrade services are \$150,000.00-\$200,000.00. The state is requiring the foundation and drainage to be paid for by the grantee. Haun has been working with the JNF to raise funds. He will be reaching out to townships and counties to see if they are interested in helping. Police, fire and EMS will all utilize the training site along with neighboring counties. The tower needs to be done by March 2024 and the water main completed by April 2024. Watson said he would like to see what other entities are providing before the city commits to a certain dollar amount. Cover said the townships should be able to provide a reasonable amount of money and he would like to see finalized cost estimates.

**Health Insurance Decision:** Keys said a decision on insurance is due soon. Arnold said he reviewed the plans and compared deductibles and coverage and he was pleased with the current plans. There was a motion by Watson, second by Overton, to keep the same health, dental and vision plans. The motion passed unanimously.

**Closing of City Offices for 2023 Christmas Party:** Wood requested to let all employees attend the party from 11-2 at the Firehouse on December 8<sup>th</sup>. This would require City Hall to be closed. Employees will be paid for a regular 8-hour day. There was a motion by Cover, second by Watson, to approve the request. The motion passed unanimously.

**2023 Trick or Treating Hours:** The recommendation is for Saturday, October 28<sup>th</sup> from 5-7 PM. There was a motion by Arnold, second by Cover, to approve the recommendation. The motion passed unanimously.

**Committee Reports:** None.

**Administrative Comments:**

**Keys** said the budget has been submitted to Gateway. September 25<sup>th</sup> will be the public hearing and October 9<sup>th</sup> will be the budget adoption meeting.

**Cover** said he heard great feedback about the Little Cousin Jasper festival and thanked city employees for all their work helping with it.

**Watson** had nothing.

**Wood** gave kudos to Pat Fox, the Parks Dept. and the Electric Dept. for all their hard work on the LCJ festival.

**Overton** said he liked the festival being in the park.

**Arnold** said he was contacted by a citizen regarding a home on Front St. with a jet ski on a trailer. Anderson said they have been cited multiple times and it's out of his hands at this point. Ahler said he could prepare a petition and file it, if Council would like. Council told him to prepare a petition.

**Weishaar** thanked employees for helping with the LCJ festival and thanked the Electric Dept. for putting the flags up. She asked Keys what the status of the SJC annexation was. Keys said all pertinent information has been sent to the County Clerk, County Auditor, Office of Indiana Secretary of State and the Office of Census Data. The ordinance has also been recorded with the County Recorder's office. She has not heard back from the County Auditor's office to confirm that they have everything they need on their end to process the annexation. She has reached out by phone and email multiple times.

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

**Superintendents Reports:**

**Police Dept:** Anderson had nothing.

**Law Dept:** Ahler had nothing.

**Utility Office:** Smart had nothing.

**Building Dept:** Davis said there will be a contractor at City Hall tomorrow to repair Keys' office and any other damaged ceiling tiles. He said the Redevelopment Commission met and committed \$468,200.00 and a loan of \$675,000.00 to the sewage works improvements. The Commission also approved a façade grant program for downtown businesses. Lastly, the Advisory Plan Commission met and had favorably recommended amending the zoning ordinance regarding requirements for pools, minimum yard setbacks, architectural standards and to allow dwellings in business districts.

**Fire Dept:** Haun said to remember the victims of 9/11. He will be gone the last week of September at a leadership conference. Breakfast on Sunday was a huge hit.

**Electric Dept:** Larson had nothing.

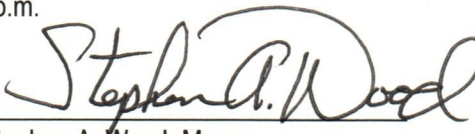
**Street, Sanitation, Water and Sewage:** Black said the CSO audit for the sewer department went great, with 0 deficiencies. The phosphorus building and GMS project have both started. J. Lockridge said the water main and lines are 60% complete. Weishaar asked when the brick streets project is starting. J. Lockridge said April 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Cemetery Dept:** Baltes was absent.

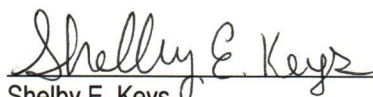
**Gas Dept:** C. Lockridge said they are starting on the McDonald's regulator station Thursday and will be out there all next week. Cover asked if any gas has been purchased for the winter. C. Lockridge said she believes we have.

**Park Dept:** Effinger said there is a ribbon cutting Friday at 4:00 PM for Blacker Fields.

There being nothing more to come before council, there was a motion by Overton, second by Cover, to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

  
Stephen A. Wood, Mayor

Attest:

  
Shelby E. Keys  
Clerk-Treasurer