

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
COMMON COUNCIL
September 25, 2023**

The Common Council of the City of Rensselaer met on September 25, 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 Elizabeth Hartmann with First Christian Church and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Answering roll call were: Mayor Stephen Wood; Clerk-Treasurer Shelby Keys; Council Members Kevin Arnold, Noelle Weishaar, George Cover, Ernest Watson, Jr; Building Commissioner Josh Davis, Park Supt. Joe Effinger; Cemetery Caretaker Tony Baltes, 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. Council Member Russ Overton was absent. City Attorney Jacob Ahler arrived after roll call.

Also in attendance were Garrett Welker, Jody Moore, Jeff Rayburn, Cody Heldak, Caleb DeJong, Elizabeth Hartmann and Stace Pickering.

The minutes of the September 11, 2023 regular council meeting were presented. There was a motion by Arnold, second by Cover, to approve the minutes as presented. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Citizen Comments and Petitions: Jeff Rayburn gave thanks to Black and his crew for helping with a late-night water service replacement.

Public Hearing for Ordinance 20-2023, 2024 City Budget: There was a motion by Cover, second by Watson, to close the regular meeting and open the public hearing. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent. Keys read the proposed 2024 Budget:

Fund	Adopted Budget	Adopted Tax Levy	Adopted Tax Rate
Casino/Riverboat Fund	\$ 31,205.00	\$ 0.00	0.0000
Rainy Day	10,000.00	0.00	0.0000
LOIT Special Distribution	0.00	0.00	0.0000
General	4,116,198.00	1,669,895.00	0.7042
Debt Payment	110,069.00	105,814.00	0.0446
Local Income Tax	471,500.00	0.00	0.0000
Local Road & Street	50,471.00	0.00	0.0000
Motor Vehicle Highway	571,681.00	200,000.00	0.0843
Law Enforcement Continuing Education	10,000.00	0.00	0.0000
Cumulative Capital Improvement	50,000.00	0.00	0.0000
Cumulative Capital Development	241,146.00	119,120.00	0.0427
Economic Development Income Tax	260,543.00	0.00	0.0000
Redevelopment General	31,000.00	8,000.00	0.0034
American Rescue Plan	530,230.00	0.00	0.0000

Wood asked if there were any comments or questions. There were none. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Cover, to close the public hearing and open the regular meeting. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Ordinance 19-2023, Authorizing Advance Payments or Deposits for Goods or Services: Keys said prior to May 2023, municipalities were not allowed to make prepayments or deposits. Senate Enrolled Act 317 now allows for this, with a few stipulations. There have been a few situations where this has caused issues with projects and large purchases. Watson said he would like to make sure that this is not an everyday thing. He understands we will run into issues sometimes, but this should only occur on rare occasions. Weishaar said even with having the ordinance in place, it would have to come before council to be approved on a case by case basis. Ahler said any expenditure still has to be approved by Council. There was a motion by Cover, second by Weishaar, to approve the ordinance. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Resolution 42-2023, 4th Quarter Electric Tracker: Larson said this tracker reflects a 15¢ decrease per 1,000 kWh consumed. There was a motion by Watson, second by Cover, to approve the resolution. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

First Group Engineering Contract: J. Lockridge said this contract is for a 2024 asset management plan, which determines which roads should be prioritized for the next round of grant funding. This is a requirement to receive the Community Crossings grant and will make the city eligible for grant dollars to replace street signs. The contract is for \$28,900.00 and there is funding available in EDIT and MVH. Arnold asked how often this is done. J. Lockridge said once a year. There was a motion by Arnold, second by Watson, to approve the contract. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Quotes for Electric Dept. Digger Truck: Larson said the department has a 2005, breaks are bad and it can't lift anything heavy. Parts are not available for it. They use a 1990 truck as backup. The internal hoses have blown. It is currently being rehoused in Indianapolis. After inquiring about new trucks, he was told a 34-month lead time. The department uses the digger truck to set poles, transformers, overhead lines. Larson said he will always want a backup digger truck and he did ask the company they are currently renting one from if it was for sale and it is not. There are only 2 companies to get quotes from. Arnold asked if a used truck was an option. Larson said they've never done that before, but it could be an option. Arnold said he wasn't suggesting getting a used one that is the

same age as the other trucks the city has, but a truck that is 10-15 years newer. He would like to explore all options. Watson said they are only talking about quotes right now. There was a motion by Cover, second by Watson, to allow Larson to get quotes for a digger truck. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

Public Relations Request: Haun said Fire Prevention Week is October 8th-14th. The Fire Department open house will be October 12th from 6-8 PM. Haun requested \$500.00 from the public relations fund for snacks and drinks for the open house. There was a motion by Weishaar, second by Arnold, to approve the request. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

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

Committee Reports: None.

Administrative Comments:

Cover had nothing.

Watson had nothing.

Keys had nothing.

Wood had nothing.

Overton was absent.

Arnold said during this budget process he has learned that the utilities aren't budgeted and he doesn't understand why. Wood said they are working on a capital asset management plan. Arnold said he is referring to operating budgets. He thinks the discussion needs to be had. Smart said there has been discussion on initiating budgets for the utilities, but that has not come to fruition.

Weishaar said she has also reached out to other municipalities regarding utilities being budgeted. A lot of municipalities don't, a few said they do. A budget along with an asset management plan is something we should look into, especially as a tool to look forward. Weishaar also said she, along with Council and the Mayor, received a letter from a homeowner regarding the unsewered areas of Owen Street. Letters were sent to residents with a deadline that they needed to hookup to the sewer by. These residents are having difficulty getting contractors to perform the work and an extension was requested. In the past, they have been accommodated. Cover asked what kind of extension would be recommended. J. Lockridge said with the I-65 annexation, they were given a 90-day extension. Arnold said with the winter months coming, the ground could still be frozen. There was a motion by Cover, second by Weishaar, to approve extending the date to April 30, 2024. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent. J. Lockridge said they would send letters out to all residents to let them know.

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 by majority, with Overton absent.

Superintendents Reports:

Police Dept: Anderson had nothing.

Law Dept: Ahler had nothing. Arnold asked Ahler if he had an update on the home on Front St. that was discussed last meeting. Ahler said he has driven past it, but nothing has been filed. He is awaiting photos.

Utility Office: Smart had nothing.

Building Dept: Davis had nothing.

Fire Dept: Haun said he had hose testing done. 11,000 feet were tested, 800 feet failed and 3,200 feet will soon need to be taken out of service. Attending the National Fire Academy Leadership training in Valparaiso this week, it's a 56-hour course. Groundbreaking for the new training tower is October 26th at 5:00 PM at the fire house.

Electric Dept: Larson said some linemen participated in the Lineman Rodeo. Garrett Welker got 1st in the obstacle course and 2nd in the alley changeout. As a team, they got 2nd in the crossarm changeout. For the 3rd year in a row, the hurt man rescue comes back to Rensselaer, with Brett Wilhite placing 1st.

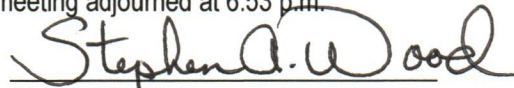
Street, Sanitation, Water and Sewage: Black had nothing. J. Lockridge said all water services are done on Van Rensselaer St. Working on getting the blacktop and sidewalks completed.

Cemetery Dept: Baltes said Memories Alive was well attended and he thanked the Jasper County Historical Society for putting it on. He said the north addition of cemetery was leveled with sand, and when they got to dig a grave it caves in. Baltes was quoted \$4,750.00 for a metal box to be put in the ground to stabilize the sand. There was a motion by Watson, second by Arnold, to approve the quote. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

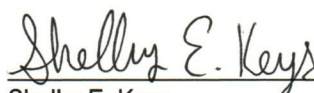
Gas Dept: C. Lockridge said they are on week 2 of replacing the regulator station.

Park Dept: Effinger said there is a Park Board meeting Monday at 6:30 PM and the ribbon cutting for Blacker Fields was very well attended. He would like to get new trashcans for all the shelter houses at the parks, plus a few extras. He was quoted \$28,614.00 and has the money in his budget. There was a motion by Cover, second by Watson, to approve the quote. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent.

There being nothing more to come before council, there was a motion by Cover, second by Weishaar, to adjourn. The motion passed by majority, with Overton absent, and the meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.


Stephen A. Wood
Mayor

Attest:



Shelby E. Keys
Clerk-Treasurer